

STACK
ANNEX

5

051

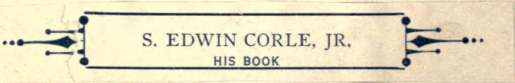
487

California
Regional
Library

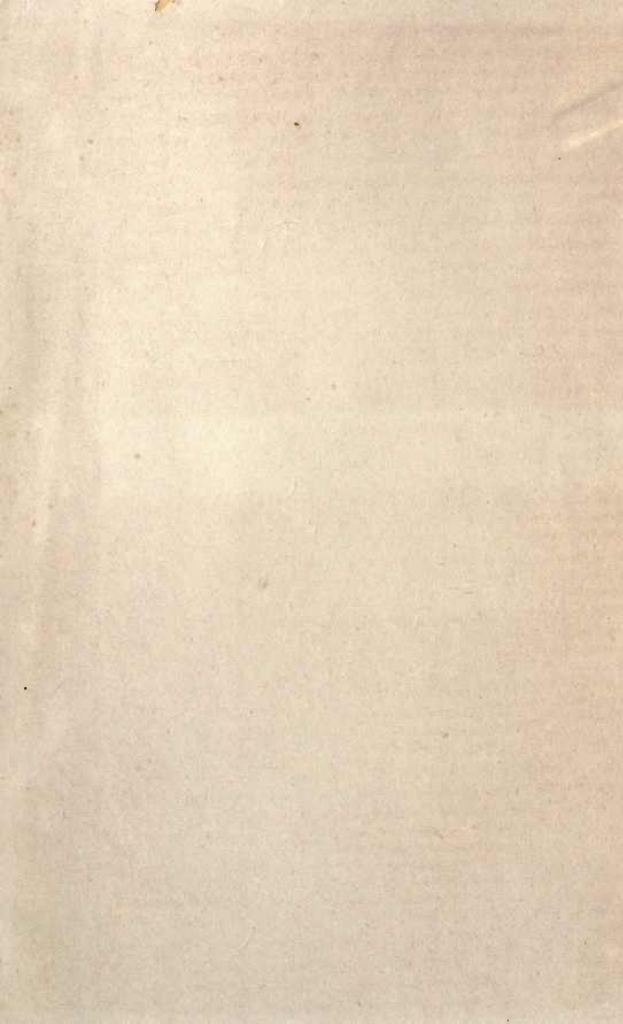


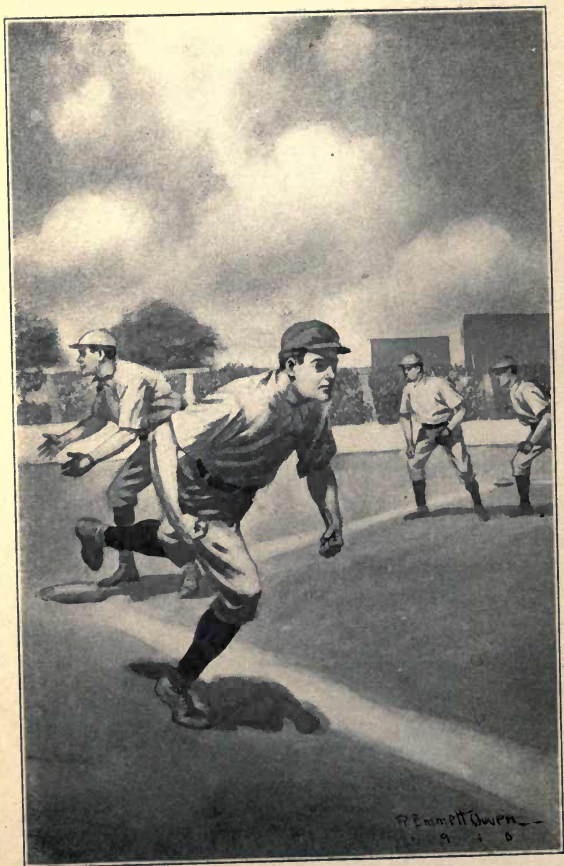
FRANK MERRIWELL'S VICTORIES

BURT · L
STANDISH



S. EDWIN CORLE, JR.
HIS BOOK





The Yale men broke out enthusiastically as Merry passed second and tore like a steam-engine toward third.

(See page 306)

FRANK MERRIWELL'S VICTORIES

BY

BURT L. STANDISH

AUTHOR OF

"Frank Merriwell's School Days," "Frank Merriwell's Chums,"
"Frank Merriwell's Foes," etc.

PHILADELPHIA

DAVID McKAY, PUBLISHER

604-8 SOUTH WASHINGTON SQUARE

Copyright, 1900
By STREET & SMITH

Frank Merriwell's Victories

All rights reserved, including that of translation into foreign languages,
including the Scandinavian.

FRANK MERRIWELL'S VICTORIES.

CHAPTER I.

BINK OPENS THE BALL.

Bink Stubbs opened the ball at Niagara. He did not use a latch-key nor a jimmy—he opened it with his little cigarette.

Merriwell's Athletic Team had come on from the Adirondacks to Niagara shortly after defeating the "University," or Wabeek Nine, in the finest game of baseball ever seen in the Great North Woods, and were quartered at a well-known hotel in the Falls city.

They were there to see the wonders of Niagara and to meet the Niagara Rapids, a local athletic organization of great renown, in a field-sports battle which promised to be an extremely interesting affair; but Bink Stubbs and his cigarette started the excitement long before the time set for the big contest. "Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth!" The fire on the end of Bink's cigarette was but a glowing speck of red, yet it was mighty in its capacity for sensational destructiveness. The touch of that glowing speck of red raised Ned at that hotel.

This is the way Bink opened the ball:

He was strolling and quarreling with Danny along a wide piazza in the cool of the evening, where a lot of pyrotechnic material had been collected for a big fireworks display that night, and as he stopped to shake his fist threateningly under Danny's nose, he took the lighted cigarette from his mouth, that the words might flow with greater fluency. As he talked, he thrust his left hand holding the cigarette behind him and unconsciously touched off a fiery pinwheel.

There was a sputtering hiss as the pinwheel flicked its fiery tail around, sending out a shower of flame and sparks.

"Gee-whiskers!" Danny screeched, leading back and almost falling over the railing. Bink Stubbs flirted round as quickly as the pinwheel. Another pinwheel was hissing and hopping and revolving.

"Gee! they are whiskers!" he gasped.

"Better whisk 'em out of there!" Danny exclaimed, as if he contemplated a flying leap over the railing to the ground below. "You did that! That was all your fault. You must have touched it off with your cigarette!"

"Shut up!" Bink squawked, as he made a dive for the pinwheels. "You are to blame. Your hot words would set anything on fire."

But Bink's efforts to corral the fire-spitting pinwheels were not a glowing success. His hand closed

on one, but he dropped it with a howl as it sent a spout of flame up his sleeve.

"Get a pair of tongs!" shrieked Danny, climbing up on the railing.

"I'll hammer you like a pair of tongs!" Bink howled back, trying to get hold of the other wheel. "Why don't you help me, you lunatic?"

Thereupon Danny dropped off the railing and rushed to Bink's assistance.

The pinwheels were spreading the fire everywhere, and other ominous hissings began to be heard. A bunch of firecrackers began to pop and crackle like mimic musketry.

"If you can't hold them with your hands, use your teeth!" squealed Danny, who thought he foresaw a lot of fun in this premature pyrotechnic display. "See me!"

Whizz-z-z—smack!

A Roman candle shot its burning ball almost into Danny's mouth, and he tumbled backward with a yell.

"Yes, I see you!" Bink snarled, dancing about as the pinwheels burned his fingers. "Hold 'em in your teeth!"

Then, in his desperation, Bink gave the fireworks a kick that sent sparks and combustibles flying in every direction.

"Help me clear these things out of here, or the hotel will be burned up!"

Danny scratched at his mouth, then rolled over on his back to stare lugubriously at the display. Other Roman candles began to hurl red and green balls. A rocket hissed like a meteor out into the street, showering Danny with a smother of sparks.

"Turn in the fire-alarm!" he screeched. "Ow! That burnt my eyes out!"

Bang!

A cannon-cracker exploded under Bink's nose with a report louder than a musket. Another rocket tried to bore a hole through the piazza railing, and finding it could not do this, jumped back and began to tear round the piazza like a crazy snake. Danny leaped screechingly to his feet.

"Help get 'em out of here!" Bink roared.

He clasped an armful of rockets to his bosom, with the intention of hurling them over the railing, but dropped them when one hissed upward to the piazza roof and came down with an eccentric curve.

Suddenly the din became deafening. Rockets, Roman candles, pinwheels, firecrackers, big and little, began to fizz and hiss and whiz and explode. A candle-ball bored Bink in the ear. Another plugged Danny's hat like a ball from the rifle of a sharpshooter, while the rockets that could not get into the street raced and raved and tore round the piazza in a way that was simply maddening.

Bink, who had been doing his best to stop the trouble which he had begun with his cigarette, reeled backward.

"If I had a hose, I'd turn it on you!" he shouted.

"Better turn it on the fireworks."

Bink raced along the piazza yelling "Fire!" at the top of his voice.

Herbert Hammerswell came bounding round the corner, and a rocket shot past his ear with a fiendish shriek that brought him up with a jerk.

Delancy Livingston also appeared, but a fire of candle-balls seemed to mow him down. Then the proprietor, after turning on the fire-alarm, came upon the scene with a bound.

He became wildly excited when his eyes fell on the whizzing, whirring, snapping display. He thought the hotel was doomed, and opened his mouth to shout some order, when a cannon-cracker exploded with startling report under his heels, and he jumped into the air as if he had been fired from a gun.

A policeman, hearing the calls and hearing what he thought was shooting, climbed to the piazza and rushed toward the proprietor, swinging his club and nervously fingering his revolver. But he halted in uncertainty when he discovered the cause of the trouble.

In another minute the piazza was full of people, who shouted indistinguishable orders, and who raced

and tore round like the inmates of a madhouse. Bink crawled out from under their feet, as they ducked and ran toward the nearest doorway. Danny scrambled up and followed him. The policeman got a shot from a rocket in the belt that took away his courage, and he followed Danny.

"Can't do anything!" they heard him pant. "Where is the fire department?"

The fire department soon came upon the scene with galloping horses. Delancy and Hammerswell were shinning down the piazza posts as the hose began to work.

"Wow!" Hammerswell screeched, as the water spouted and pailfuls seemed to fall on his back.

"Gracious!" exploded Delancy, forgetting his drawl. "This is an outrage!" as the stream struck him and fairly knocked him from the railing to the ground, where he lay dazedly in the muddy pool that began to collect. "Aw! gracious! I'm going to sue somebody for this!"

Merriwell, who had hurried forward to be of assistance if he could, but who had also been forced to retreat and leap over the railing to the ground, heard him, and heartily laughed. Delancy got up, crest-fallen, with the water streaming from his fire-blackened face.

"Aw!" he said, as he heard that laugh. "You're a scoundrel, don't you know—a precious scoundrel!"

"And you're a chump!" said Frank. "Do you think I turned that water on you? Or set those things on fire? Perhaps you did that last?"

Delancy tried to recover his dignity, and hunted for his eye-glass, but it was misplaced. But he gave Frank a stony look that was intensely amusing.

"You're a jewel, Delancy! I wonder that your sister don't cut your acquaintance. What are you doing here, anyway?"

"Aw! I have a right to be in any hotel where I pay my money, don't you know! What are you doing here? You're the intruder, don't you know! We were here first!"

The piazza was a Babel of noises, for the fireworks were still exploding and hissing, and the guests, having retreated to places of safety, were wildly talking, gesticulating, and advising. No one knew how the fire had started.

"Do you think the hotel will burn up?" Bink gasped.

"It seems to be doing that now, for most of the rockets are trying to go upward. But it may burn down! We'll wait and see!"

"Danny, you're a fool!"

"Thanks, awfully. I know I'm a fool for talking to you. But I didn't expect you to be able to see it."

"I'll have to pay for this," Bink groaned.

"I think you'd better have another cigarette!" Dan-

ny urged. "Or were you able to finish the one that started the fire?"

"I'll finish you!" Bink howled, lunging at Danny.

As he lunged, a rocket "lifted" him with a sidelong stroke that tore his clothing and tumbled him down.

"Oh, I'll finish you!" he gasped, getting up and shaking his fist at Danny. "Wait till I catch you, and I'll finish you!"

But the fire was soon out. It had confined itself to the fireworks, which were soon too soaked to do any further damage.

"A premature display!" groaned the proprietor. "I wanted to have that a little later. But I'm glad the hotel didn't catch from them. I wonder how the thing happened."

Bink sought out the proprietor shortly afterward and stumblingly told how "the thing happened," and offered pay.

"You're one of Merriwell's crowd?"

"Yes."

"Well, the pay is nothing, for one of Merriwell's friends. But I want to advise you a bit, young fellow. Cigarettes are not good for fireworks—or boys!"

"He called me a boy!" Bink moaned to Danny, stretching himself to his full height.

"You little runt, what else are you? I'm the only man in Merriwell's crowd, and the proprietor saw it. He hasn't said a word to me!"

CHAPTER II.

THE "ONE-LEGGED BLONDIN."

Delancy, soaked in sweet oil and camphor-ice, lay back on the bed in his room, while Hammerswell, similarly soaked, and moaning, sat cramped up on a chair and talked.

"If one of the confounded rockets had only shot a hole through Merriwell!" Hammerswell grumbled. "That villain always seems to get off without any trouble."

"How does it come that his crowd is in the same hotel with us?" Delancy petulantly queried. "Aw! that's going to make it decidedly uncomfortable for us, don't you know!"

Hammerswell bent forward.

"I didn't say anything to you about it, for I thought you might make a kick, but I overheard Merriwell saying his crowd was coming to this hotel, before we left the Adirondacks. I wanted to be near them. So we came on first, and stopped here!"

"I don't want to be near them, don't you know!" Delancy grumbled. "I'd like to put the seas between us. They are a horrid crowd!"

"I shall be glad to put the seas between us by and by, but not until I have been revenged on Frank Merriwell."

"What can you do? You'll get yourself into a lot of trouble. You came close to it before. I don't want to stay here!"

"But no harm can come to us!"

"Harm already!" sighed Delancy, pointing to his burned face. "And what can you do to Merriwell?"

Hammerswell leaned farther forward and lowered his voice.

"I've found a man to do the work."

"What work?" fishing out his eye-glass and staring at his friend.

"To do up Merriwell!" in a whisper.

"Aw!"

"Yes. That's straight goods. I fell in with him since coming here. As you say, it's risky trying to do these things ourselves; and why should we, when we have plenty of money to hire other men to do it? Money will do anything."

"Aw! you're right. I wish it would take this pain out of my face!"

He rolled uneasily, and groaned.

"I came across the fellow in a saloon. He had been drinking, and I overheard him mumbling something to himself that assured me he was just the man I wanted. I called him into a room and had a talk with him. He was eager for money—would do anything for money! I told him about Merriwell, and he has agreed to do it!"

Delancy sat up on the bed, momentarily forgetful of his burns. He put up his eye-glass again, and stared at the speaker.

"Why don't you ask me what he is to do?"

"Aw! I was coming to that."

"I told him that I didn't care what he did, if he only did something to forever ruin Frank Merriwell's pitching-arm."

"What did he say?"

"He said he'd throw him into the whirlpool for me."

Delancy gasped.

"You—you didn't hire him to do that?"

"I'm not a fool!" snapped Herbert.

"Aw! I didn't know, you know!"

"I told him that wasn't what I wanted—that I didn't care to go as far as that; though you know there have been times when I have been desperate enough to do even that!

"He seemed bent on throwing Merry into the whirlpool, even when I told him that wasn't what I wanted. And even after I had arranged with him to do up Merriwell's arm, he came back to the other proposition."

"What's his plan?" drawled Delancy, dropping back on the bed.

"He says he has some sort of a bomb—that's what I understood him to say—which will do the work. I don't know how he is going to do it. But if he does

not perform his part of the contract, he isn't to get any boodle. He clearly understands that, even if he was half-drunk at the time."

"You didn't put that contract into writing?"

"I'm not a fool!"

"Aw! I didn't know, you know!"

"Of course I didn't put it into writing."

A man came shouting along the street beneath the hotel window.

"The One-legged Blondin on the high rope! Come out, everybody! Most wonderful feat ever witnessed!"

Delancy Livingston sat up again.

"I'm a horrid sight, don't you know! But I'd like to see that fellow. I heard them talking about him in the hotel this afternoon. They say it's a performance worth witnessing."

"And I'd like to get out of this room."

"When is your fellow—your drunken man—to do this?"

"He is to try it before the field-sports come off!"

"Aw! what is his name?"

"Rodney Skaggs."

"Aw! queer name!" getting up and beginning to wipe away the oily preparation from his smarting face.

When they got out of the hotel they found a crowd pressing down toward the river. The thunder of the falls filled their ears, sounding at some distance away

like the lashing of heavy surf. A tight rope had been stretched across the street between some tall buildings.

"Thought it was to be over the falls!" a man grumbled. "The original Blondin walked across Niagara on a tight rope. This fellow is a faker."

"But they say he has only one leg," was the answer. "How in time can a one-legged man walk a tight rope? Shouldn't think he could do that, if the rope was laid on the ground!"

The answer soon came in the appearance of the "One-legged Blondin" himself. He was a heavy-faced, brutal-looking man, wearing circus-tights. Yet one leg was off at the knee, and the place of the lost member was taken by a wooden leg, with which he stumped along as the crowd opened for him.

Herbert Hammerswell fell back with a gasp of surprise as his eyes fell on this man.

"Aw! what's the matter?" questioned Delancy, turning upon his friend.

"It's him!"

"Aw!"

"You don't understand? It's the man I was telling you about. He was one-legged. I didn't think to mention that. But it's the same fellow."

"No! but how——"

The "One-legged Blondin" was beginning to climb up a rope, hand over hand, in a skilful manner, dangling and swinging his wooden leg.

Herbert turned about.

"Say," he whispered, in an anxious voice, "I want to go back and think over this. That fellow isn't the sort of a chap I thought!"

"Looks like he might do anything!" Delancy whispered, after a study of the rope-walker's brutal face. "He'd sell himself for a drink. But I thought a man couldn't do that kind of work and drink. Aw! this puzzles me, don't you know!"

He put up his eye-glass for a stare, while Hammerswell, though he had said he was going, did not stir from his tracks, but watched the man in blank wonder.

"Skaggs!" another man was whispering to himself at the same time, and that other man was Gregory Carker, whose eyes were glued on the tight-rope walker as if held there by a strange fascination. "What is the meaning of this? I never knew that the fellow was a rope-walker! I can't understand it. But that's Skaggs, sure enough!"

Carker, though the thing was not noticed by his friends, all of whom were looking up at the "One-legged Blondin," seemed almost as much disturbed and agitated as Herbert Hammerswell.

"I shall look into this," was his thought.

"I wonder where the fellow is stopping? I'll follow him when the show is over, and find out."

CHAPTER III.

SOMEWHAT MYSTERIOUS.

The performance given by the "One-legged Blondin" was really very creditable, and would not have disgraced a tight-rope walker who possessed two good legs and was a stranger to drink. He walked back and forth from building to building several times, turned somersaults, landing cleverly on the rope on his one foot, and did other feats usually performed by rope-walkers.

"How du-dud-dud-does he do it!" Joe Gamp gasped.

"There's a hollow groove in the bottom of the wooden leg," said Merriwell. "If you'll look close, you'll see it when he lifts the peg leg. He sets that squarely on the rope each time!"

"Gug-gug-goshfry! So he dud-does! Enough to mum-make my head swim to look at him. Cuc-couldn't handle that wooden leg on the lul-level ground."

"Your head swims because it's light!" chirped Bink.

"Yours will fuf-feel a gug-gug-good deal lighter if I thump you one!"

"Why is he like high prices?" asked Danny, ready with his inevitable conundrum.

"Because he is away above the heads of the poor

men!" said Carker. "Don't fling disagreeable conundrums at us, Danny!"

"Because he's bound to come down!"

"High prices don't always come down!" Carker corrected.

"Well, he's coming down," Bink asserted.

The rope-walker had swung down from his rope, and now caught hold of the rope that led to it from below, and slid deftly to the ground. The performance finished, he passed the hat, and after a little speech in which he thanked everybody and stated that he would repeat his performance the following evening, he disappeared, and some men took down the rope.

"Where is Carker?" Frank asked, looking around.

"Why, he was right here just this minute!" Bruce answered. "Got mixed in with the crowd, I suppose."

Carker was trying to trail Skaggs home. He followed him for a short distance, saw him beckon to Hammerswell, and saw the two move away together toward a doorway.

"Now, what does that mean? My friend Skaggs is growing more mysterious every minute. How does he happen to be acquainted with that scoundrel, Hammerswell?"

In a little while Skaggs and Hammerswell reappeared, Skaggs in an ordinary suit, in which he stumped along, smoking a pipe and jingling in his pocket the coin he had collected; while Hammerswell,

who walked at his side, seemed the personification of uneasiness, casting anxious glances round and noting the appearance of every man who came near.

With his wonder constantly increasing, Carker kept well to the rear, out of sight, and patiently pursued this oddly-assorted couple.

Again Skaggs went into a doorway with Hammerswell. Carker stood in the street and waited, but they did not reappear. Growing impatient, Carker went up to the doorway. It opened into a corridor, which opened again into a yard, beyond which was a fence.

"Fooled!" he said. "Why should Skaggs want to keep out of my way in that manner? It's plain he saw me following, and has done this to throw me off the trail."

Skaggs, still accompanied by Hammerswell, was rapidly stumping away in the darkness beyond the fence.

"I don't like this!" Herbert was grumbling.

"You like it as well as I do. That feller was follering us!"

"I mean I don't like to be walking along this way with you. Somebody is sure to notice it."

"Ain't I good company?" Skaggs fiercely demanded, "What's the matter with you?"

"I may be arrested."

"Well, if I do your dirty work, I'm likely to be!"

"And if I'm seen with you, when you're pulled, the officers will come for me!"

Skaggs laughed hoarsely.

"Don't calculate to git pulled! Not for doing *your* work!"

The tone was peculiar.

"What do you mean by that?"

"Here's a shanty. Come in, and I'll tell you!"

There was a threat in the words which made Herbert shiver. He began to wish he had never held any communication with this mysterious stranger, whom he had taken for a drunken loafer and dyed-in-the-wool villain. The memory of Skaggs on the tight rope troubled him. Skaggs pushed open a door, which in the darkness Hammerswell had failed to see.

"Come in!" he gruffly invited.

Herbert hung back.

"I—I——" he faltered.

"That's two eyes!" again laughing hoarsely. "With two eyes you ought to be able to follow me, even if the place is as dark as a well. Come on!"

The imperative command could not be disobeyed. Hammerswell felt drawn forward, though he tried to hang back. When they had gone a few feet, they stopped, and the rope-walker scratched a match. The door had been closed behind them, and Hammerswell looked about as Skaggs lighted a candle. It was a

queer place, littered with wicker work and unfinished moccasins.

"The Injun stays here!" said Skaggs, with a grunt, as he dropped to a log of wood that served for a stool and motioned Hammerswell to another.

"Who? Swiftwing?"

"Don't know anything about Swiftwing, whoever he is. Strong Arm, the Oneida. Hain't seen him? He's around the city all the time, sellin' beads and moccasins. Partner of mine."

Then his heavy, brutal face grew dark, and he began to take off the wooden leg, while Hammerswell stupidly stared at him, now and then giving the interior of the strange, shantylike place a questioning look. He seemed to have dropped out of the Falls city and to have brought up with a jerk in some smoky Indian lodge. And now, as Skaggs began to remove that wooden leg, a sense of horror chased up and down his spinal column.

"For Heaven's sake, what are you doing that for?"

"Don't think you cut any figure in those celestial regions!" snapped Skaggs. "I've got something here I want you to set your eyes on. I've been thinking, since you and I had our little talk. I was pretty drunk, but I remember it, and I remember you!"

Again Hammerswell looked round the room, stared at the leg, and shuddered. He began to wonder if the rope-walker had locked the door through which they

had entered. His mind was so bewildered he could not remember.

The leg came off without much trouble, and Skaggs turned the larger, cuplike end toward Hammerswell. In this end was a hole, which seemed to be plugged up with a piece of glass.

The rope-walker pulled out this glass. It seemed to be filled with some dark substance, and was in shape and size a little larger than an egg, with the upper end flattened.

"Dynamite!" said the rope-walker, giving it a loving pat.

Hammerswell turned white with fear.

"D-don't!" he stammered. "The stuff may explode!"

"That's what I got it for—to explode! That's what the stuff is made for!"

"I—I——"

"Two more eyes, and still you can't see anything!"

He seemed to take delight in Herbert's torture, playing with him as a cat does with a mouse. And there was such a queer, villainous look on the brutal face, that Hammerswell had all he could do to keep from springing up and rushing blindly to the door in an endeavor to force his way out of the place.

"What do you keep the stuff for—in your leg?"

Skaggs gave it another toss, which brought a gurgle of fear from the shaking youth.

"Well, you see, I'm liable to fall from that rope at any time. You seen how high it was? If I should come down from that rope onto the stones that are always in a pavement, I'd be broken all to pieces. I lost one leg that way once, and I know what it is. Ought to have stopped the tight-rope business when I fell that time, but I didn't. But I'll never git another broken leg!"

He stopped and glared at Herbert.

"Why don't you ask me why?"

"Wh-wh-why?"

"Because when I come down, this dynamite will blow me into ribbons!"

"B-b-but the people?"

Skaggs gave the glass another toss, and swore roundly.

"What do I care for the people? They're no better than I am! Now, I've got a word for you, young feller!"

"Y-yes! What is it?"

"I was drunk when you came to me. To-night I'm sober. Likely to-morrow I'll be drunk again, and if you should come to me I might promise you the same thing. But to-night I'm sober!"

He began to replace the wooden leg, having first pushed the glass down into place.

"Y-y-y-yes!"

Hammerswell stammered, his face growing whiter and every nerve a-tremble.

"If you ever come near me again, whether I'm drunk or sober——"

"Y-y-y-yes!"

He arose and stumped toward the shaking youth.

"I'll kill you! Now, git! Git!" he repeated, as Hammerswell leaped up with a cry of fear. "Git!"

The terrified young rascal fled to the door and tore it open, with Skaggs stumping after him; and as he tumbled out into the darkness, the wooden leg was lifted, and sent him sprawling.

"And there was dynamite in it!" he gasped, as he sprang up and dashed away.

CHAPTER IV.

RATTLETON GETS A FRIGHT.

"Scate Gott!"

Harry Rattleton whispered the exclamation, as he peered through a tiny, dingy window, into a tiny, dingy room, and saw Greg Carker holding a little girl on his knees and flashing before her eyes a bright five-dollar gold piece. The child had been crying, and Carker was trying to quiet her.

"If Skaggs lays his hands on you again, I'll make him suffer for it! Take this five dollars and buy the biggest and handsomest doll you can find. You can have great times with it, can't you? No, I won't let Skaggs hit you again!"

"Whee-giz!" Rattleton gasped. "This is the queerest thing I ever struck!"

He had come in sight of Carker while out walking with Frank Merriwell, and had hurried after him, leaving Frank to come on more leisurely. Then he had lost sight of Carker, and while looking about had been drawn through an alley by the scream of a child. Now he saw this.

A door opened into the dingy room, and Skaggs entered. He was drinking again and a bottle bulged one of his pockets. A scowl came to his brutal face as he saw the child in Carker's lap

A sudden sense that this might be called spying, and that he had no right to be there, even though what he beheld was so inexplicable and mysterious, caused Harry Rattleton to draw back from the window and turn to leave; but the scream of the child and a warning cry from Carker drew him back.

"Greg may need help!" was his thought. "I'm not a fighter—I'd rather run than fight; but if he needs help, I'll try to help him! Dunder what he's wooing in there—I mean I wonder what he's doing in there? That's the fellow who walked the tight rope! I'd know that face anywhere."

Rodney Skaggs had caught up a stool and seemed about to brain Greg with it. The child was behind the youth, and he put back a hand and touched her, as if to assure her he would protect her.

"Makes me feel like jumping through the window!" Rattleton nervously chattered, his sympathies with Greg and the child.

"Sit down!" Carker commanded. "Sit down, you fool! If you try any tricks on me, I'll have you arrested, and if I hear of you striking this child again, I'll have her taken away from you by the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children."

"I'll smash your head in!" Skaggs hissed; but Carker's words seemed to cow him, and instead of hurling the stool at Carker's head he sat down on it.

Carker drew the child to him, and put an arm pro-

tectingly round her. She was ragged and ill cared for, but her face was bright and winning. If she was Skaggs' child, she got her handsome face from the mother, for Skaggs' visage was of a low type.

"How does it come that you're in this rope-walking business?" Carker asked.

"Was always in it!"

"Not when I knew you."

"Jist dropped out of it for a little while, 'cause I could git bigger pay—out o' you!" said the brutal fellow, with a sneer. "When I couldn't work you any longer, I went to rope-walkin' ag'in. I knowed you'd sympathize with an honest workin' man, but not with a rope-walker. See?"

"I see that I've been a big fool. I followed you here to have a talk with you."

"Oh, I won't give ye away!" sneered Skaggs, with a leer which showed that the liquor was beginning to take effect.

The bored look deepened on Carker's face.

"This is eavesdropping! I must get out of here!" Rattleton was again thinking. "I thought Greg might need help!"

"Oh, we were a fine couple of partners in the good old days, an' don't ye forget it!" said Skaggs, beginning to take off his wooden leg. "I done the work, and you furnished the money! I'd like to hook onto another partner like you!"

"You're a miserable scoundrel!" said Carker, with the utmost composure.

The wooden leg came off, and Skaggs flourished it.

"Do you know what's in that?" he asked significantly. "See that?" and he held up the egg-shaped glass. "D'ye know what's in that?"

"It looks as if it might contain as much brains as your head!"

"That's dynamite!"

Harry was drawing back from the window, but those words froze him. The rope-walker glanced toward the window, and saw the staring eyes and white face.

He had seemed on the point of hurling the glass at Carker, but now Harry saw him thrust it again into the cavity in the leg, and, swinging the leg as if it were a club, hop across the room.

Rattleton beat a quick retreat toward the street, but as he turned the corner of the house he stumbled and pitched downward in the darkness. He stilled the cry that rose for utterance, as he felt himself falling into a cellarlike opening. A door flew open, and the rope-walker hopped into the circle of light that shot out into the gloom.

"Where did that spy go?" he growled; and Harry almost held his breath.

Carker did not come out of the house, and Rattleton

could hear him talking to the child as if to reassure and quiet her.

"I believe he's hid in this cellar," the rope-walker muttered, as he swayed on one foot and swung the wooden leg. "If he is, and I can lay hands on him, I'll smash him!"

Rattleton began to tremble. Though himself invisible, he could look up and see the threatening form and the terrible swinging leg. What if Skaggs should see him and hurl that dynamite leg at him?

"He's drunk," he thought, "and he would strike with that thing as quick as wink. I'd give a million dollars if I was out of here! This is what a fellow gets for prying into other people's business! Why did I stay there?"

Skaggs hopped back into the house for a light. Harry rose up to make a dash for safety, but the rope-walker returned so quickly that he was not given time. Skaggs was now swearing horribly, and, seeing that he contemplated a search of the cellar, Rattleton softly retreated and dropped down behind a box.

Skaggs hopped down into the cellar, and peered about. He put the oil-lamp on a box and began a search, still swinging the leg and swearing in a way to turn Rattleton's blood cold. Finally he came to the box, and poked behind it in the gloom with the point of the leg. Though Rattleton tried to remain firm, his

flesh crawled and shrank from the prodding as from the fangs of a snake.

Suddenly the rope-walker leaned lurchingly over the box and began a search with ~~his~~ hands. The cold sweat started out on Rattleton, and he was almost on the point of uttering a shriek and making a flying leap for the door, even though in imagination he saw the leg whizzing after him and felt the bomb rending him to pieces. Skaggs took hold of his coat. He gave it a jerk, and seemed about to hop over the box. The scared youth felt that he could stand it no longer, and he thought he heard the swish of the leg as it hissed through the air to brain him.

"Jist an old rag!" Skaggs muttered. "Yes, I recollect. Threwed in here yesterday. I thought 'twas the feller's coat! He must have skipped down the alley. Wonder what he was peekin' through the winder fer? If he comes snooping round ag'in, I'll knife him!"

The hand was withdrawn, and Rattleton sank down almost in a swoon. He was so weak from the reaction that he felt he could not rise, and heard Skaggs hopping toward the door without venturing to look in that direction. Then Skaggs climbed out of the cellar.

"Whee-giz! that was awful!" Harry weakly whispered, as he crept from behind the box. "I believe my hair has turned white. I guess I'd better dust out of this!"

CHAPTER V.

MERRIWELL'S MYSTERIOUS INFLUENCE

As Harry Rattleton was creeping cautiously out of the cellar, footsteps caused him to draw back, and a young woman passed him with springy steps. The door of the house was still open, and Harry saw her plainly in the light. She was a remarkably handsome girl, and not badly dressed. Skaggs was swearing and fuming, and seemed to be again threatening Carker.

Then a blow was heard, and the child screamed in pain. As that scream sounded, the young woman sprang through the doorway.

"Strike Dot again, Rod Skaggs, and I'll have you arrested, if you are my father!" Harry heard her say. Then he heard Carker's voice, and more swearing from Skaggs.

"There's going to be an awful row here!" he thought. "I wish Merry were here. Wonder where he went to? Perhaps I can help Greg, if he needs help! Or had I better hurry for Merry?"

He sprang out of the cellar, reasonably certain he would not be heard. Then there was another blow, and another scream, and sounds indicating that Greg Carker and the girl were fighting the drunken rope-walker.

"Scrate Gott! I must help in this!"

34 Merriwell's Mysterious Influence.

In spite of his fear of the contents of the wooden leg, Rattleton turned toward the door, and would have entered the room, for he was faithful to the last where he fancied duty called. But as he turned he heard footsteps, and, looking round, beheld Merriwell.

"Cad you've glum—glad you've come!" he cried. "Greg's in there, in an awful fight, I guess!"

Merriwell did not stop for explanations. The cries of the child and the sounds of a struggle in which it seemed that some one needed assistance drew him like a magnet. He went through the doorway on the bound; and as he entered the light he saw Greg Carker standing in front of the rope-walker with the child behind him for protection, and Skaggs courageously faced by the girl.

"Out of the way!" Skaggs yelled to the girl.

"I won't! And if you dare to lay a finger on Dot again, I'll finish you!"

The rope-walker gave a howl of rage, and sprang toward the girl with a hop, like some great baboon. His hands were outstretched to take the girl by the throat, but Merriwell caught him by the shoulder and hurled him violently against the wall. The drunken ruffian gathered himself as if to hop toward Merriwell, and picking up the wooden leg swung it round his head.

"I'll dynamite the whole of ye!" he yelled. "I'll blow ye into ribbons!"

"Stand back, there!" Frank commanded.

The rope-walker's hand dropped, and he stared. Then he gathered himself again, and the hand holding the leg went up.

"I'll smash ye!" he screamed.

"You will do nothing of the kind. Put down that leg!"

Frank looked him squarely in the eyes. The ruffian shivered.

"Who are you?" he demanded, as the hand again came down.

"That doesn't matter. Now, take that chair!"

The tones were even and steady, for all that the words were so imperative.

"I'll do nothing of the kind!" the villain howled, struggling as if to break from some strange spell.

"Sit down on that chair!"

"Why?"

"Because I say so."

Carker and the girl and the child, as well as Rattle-ton, were staring as if they could not believe their eyes.

"Sit down on that chair!" Merriwell again quietly commanded.

"You say so—you! Who are you?"

"Sit down on that chair!"

"And if I don't?"

"But you will! Sit down, I say!"

The rope-walker dropped into the chair.

"Now give me that thing!"

Skaggs drew back his hand as if to put the leg behind him.

"Give me that leg!"

Frank had never taken his eyes from the ruffian's face. The rope-walker had a feeling that those eyes were searching his very soul. Some mysterious power impelled him to do what he was told. He fought against the feeling. He tried to put the leg behind him, and stoutly refuse to surrender it. He wondered vaguely why he did not strike this young man over the head with it.

"Give me that wooden leg!"

The rope-walker reached it out to him.

"Now, sit there awhile!"

Skaggs stared at him, but sat in the chair as if he were tied there, while Frank turned to Carker, who began to move toward the door with the child. Rattleton followed Carker toward the door, and the child seemed hysterically anxious to get away. The girl looked at Merriwell with an apparent fascination almost as great as that with which Skaggs seemed to regard him.

"Let's get out of this, Merry!" Harry chattered. "He was trying to kill the child, I guess!"

And Merriwell, giving the girl a questioning glance, also went out of the house without even deigning to

give the cowed rope-walker another glance. But the ruffian did not stir.

"How did you do that?" Carker gasped.

"Some people might call it hypnotism," answered Merry quietly. "What's the meaning of all this?"

Carker flushed.

"I can't explain just now. But I'm going to put this child in some place where that villain can't beat and abuse her. He would kill her in his rage, as soon as he gets out from under that influence. I never saw anything like it. He was trying to kill us all when you came in, and he cowed under your words as if he were a child."

CHAPTER VI.

SKAGGS TURNS TRAITOR.

Herbert Hammerswell had a visitor the next forenoon, and the visitor was Rodney Skaggs. Herbert drew back in fright when he beheld the rope-walker entering his room, and heard the thump of the wooden leg on the carpeted floor.

"Wh-what do you want now?" he asked, almost perceptibly trembling.

Skaggs tried to smile, but the effort degenerated into an evil, sinister grin. He was duly sober, though the effects of his recent potations and violent outburst of temper were visible. Hammerswell pushed back his chair as if he would put as much space as possible between himself and that leg, and again shivered.

"I came to talk that thing over!" said Skaggs, dropping into a seat without invitation. "I'm ready for the job."

"You're drunk again!"

"Sober as a judge. 'Pon honor!"

"I don't want to talk to you!"

"You're thinkin' of what I said last night?"

He got up, stumped to the door, and looked into the hall, then closed the door, came back, and sat down again.

"I've come here for business. If you're willing to put up the stuff, I'll do Merriwell for you."

This was said with such malignant hate that Hammerswell was almost convinced that the rope-walker was in earnest. Still, he was afraid.

"What has changed you so?" he cautiously asked, casting fearful glances at the leg.

"He has!"

"Merriwell?"

"Yes. He came to my place last night, took my little girl away from me, just because I wanted to correct her, as any lovin' parent does sometimes, and now some society or other is holdin' her and threatenin' my arrest. I'm ready to go in with you to git even."

"Why don't you go on yourself, then?"

"'Cause I want your help, and"—with brutal frankness—" 'cause I want your money. Two heads are better than one, and four legs are better than three—unless you count in the dynamite leg."

Hammerswell shuddered.

"Why don't you take that awful stuff out of it?"

"I may need it, that's why. If I git myself in a hole in doin' up this friend of yours, for instance, I'd blow up myself and the officers before I'd be taken. Understand? The stuff in that leg is my best friend. It can protect me when nothin' else can—by takin' me off the planet."

"What do you think you can do?"

"I'd like to pitch the scoundrel into the Whirlpool."

Hammerswell had grown cautious.

"That's too risky," he said, "though I wouldn't care what you did if there was no risk. But what I'm more anxious for is to have something done that will forever ruin Merriwell as an athlete and ball-player. I don't care what it is. If you could tear his arm off with that bomb, or maim him in some way by an explosion, and make the explosion seem an accident, that would be just the stuff!"

His eyes shone with an evil light. He began to feel that he could use this tool, after all, and the thought made him forget the indignities of the previous evening. He was glad that Delancy was not there to hear the words of the rope-walker, for Delancy had begun to be squeamish in what Herbert thought a "cowardly" way, and to protest that since Merriwell had rescued his sister from the abductors in the Adirondacks he really ought not to try to do him harm. But Hammerswell was never troubled with scruples. If Merriwell should chance to save his life, he would strike at him the next minute, with no more heart or conscience than a rattlesnake. And he would be meaner in delivering his blow than a rattlesnake, for the rattler always sounds its warning.

"You don't want me to throw him into the Whirlpool, then?" the rope-walker asked, in a dissatisfied

tone. "He'll be down there to see it before he goes away. They all go!"

"If you want to throw him in on your own responsibility, I oughtn't care, I suppose. That wouldn't be my affair, you know!"

Skaggs knowingly winked.

"And I could have my little wad, jist the same as if I had gone according to instructions."

"If you stand by me, you'll never regret it!" Hammerswell significantly promised. "But, really, it seems to me it would be a greater revenge to maim the scamp in some way. It's the glory of his life to take part in athletics and sports. It would kill him if anything should happen to make that impossible. That would be a revenge worth while!"

Skaggs looked admiringly at the young villain, though he inwardly scorned him in a certain way because he did not personally seek to accomplish his own revenges.

"All right," he promised, rising to go. "Same sum mentioned before. I'll do your work for you. I've got something to make me do it now, myself; but I want your money—to help me out, if I should get into a hole. I'll do your work, young feller. Don't you never weep."

CHAPTER VII.

TALKING IT OVER.

That evening Bruce Browning came into Frank's room at the hotel where a number of his friends were gathered. He was dressed like Strong Arm, the big Oneida spoken of by Skaggs, who sold bead work and trinkets to visitors at the falls.

"Eh? What's up now?" Merriwell asked.

"The living, breathing image of an organ-grinder's monkey!" chirped Stubbs, quoting from Kipling's "Barrack Room Ballads," which he had been reading that day.

"Masked ball on the Canadian side," said Bruce. "I've an invitation, and I'm going!"

"Who gug-gave you the invi-invitation?" asked Gamp. "I'd lul-like one, mum-mum-myself!"

"So long!" said Bruce. "I can't stay with you. Just dropped in to tell you, so that if you found me missing you wouldn't go to searching the river for my remains."

"The very picture of Strong Arm!" laughed Merriwell. "Even to the hue of his face! I wonder where he got that rig?"

"And that paint?" queried Bink. "I'd like some of it."

"What for?"

"To paint the town red—after we do up the Niagara Rapids!"

"I know what girl he is going to take," said Danny, looking wise. "It's Nell Skaggs."

"What?"

"Well, you'd ought to have seen her this afternoon! She was simply stunning. Handsomest girl I've seen in a month. It wasn't her dress, but simply her looks. And Browning is stuck on her. I could see that when we were at the house this morning."

Merriwell and others had gone that morning to the home of Rodney Skaggs, though they did not find him in. But they had found Nell Skaggs there. She was uncommonly attractive in appearance, and talked intelligently, and more than one had noticed that Browning seemed "struck."

"Well, if Bruce has taken a fancy to her, it won't last. He's a pretty sensible fellow."

"No fellow is sensible when it comes to a love-affair!" Danny wisely chirped.

"Thinking of your experience with Stella Stanley?" Bink queried.

"Her face and general appearance show that Nell Skaggs is a good girl," Merry commented. "She is kind-hearted, too; but she is the daughter of a villain, and such a girl is not for Browning. He knows it, but I suppose he wants to have some fun."

Frank laughed and put up his hand to push back

his hair, and the wrist was seen to be bandaged and soaked in liniment.

That brought talk of the last ball-game in the Adirondacks, and of the contests with the Niagara Rapids to be held the next day. Merriwell's wrist was rapidly improving, but he was in no condition to pitch baseball. However, the condition of his wrist would not interfere with his running, nor with most of the contests in the big field-sports battle.

"I wish you'd tell us about Carker!" grumbled Hodge. "Do you know, that thing looks awfully black and mysterious? I don't like it."

There were others who felt the same, and that Carker owed an explanation to these friends, which he had refused to give. He was out in town now, possibly again conferring with the rope-walker.

"I wish I knew," said Frank.

"Don't you know anything?"

"Not a thing!"

"Why don't you ask him?"

"I gave him an opportunity to explain, but he pretended not to see it. I couldn't ask him. We must admit that he did the right thing by the child. She is in good hands for the present, and Skaggs can't beat her, at least. Greg is to put her permanently into the hands of some benevolent institution, I understand."

"And she is a sister of Nell?" asked Rattleton.

"This whole thing mixes me worse than the higher

mathematics," said Ready. "When my intelligent instructors attempt to lead me gently along the flowery fields of figures, the paths nearly always get tangled. This problem is as bad as the elusive 'x,' and I've thought it over until I can feel my head swelling."

"Your head is always in that condition," Danny amiably chirped.

"Well, we don't want anybody on this Athletic Team who isn't willing to make an effort to explain so strange a thing as that!" Bart positively declared. "I was taking a liking to Carker, but this looks queer."

"Where is Swiftwing?" asked Danny.

"I saw him with Strong Arm awhile ago," said Rattleton.

"And he's going to race that other Indian—not Strong Arm, but the smaller one, to-morrow?" asked Bink.

"Yes," Frank answered, "I understand that the Oneida has been added to the Niagara Rapids. He is a wonderful runner, I've heard; and they say that, as we have ten men, they want ten."

"Just an excuse to put that fellow on!" said Hodge.

"I think so myself," Frank admitted. "But we couldn't object."

"But Carker!" said Gamp, coming back to the mysterious subject. "If that fuf-fellow don't explain sus-sus-some things pretty sus-soon, I'll go cuc-cuc-crazy!"

"There is one thing!" Bart declared, looking ear-

nestly at Merriwell. "I saw Hammerswell talking with Skaggs right on that piazza to-day. Carker says he saw them together last night. Both are villains, and when two villains come together some dirt is sure to be played. I never knew it to fail. I have a feeling that something is being planned against you, Frank!"

"I'd give a good deal to know what it is, then?" said Rattleton.

"I'm sure it's something!" Hodge persisted. "And I want Merry to look out. I shall try to keep my eyes open every minute until after those contests."

"Eyes open all the time? If you don't sleep, you'll not be able to run as fast as a tortoise to-morrow!" declared Bink, feeling that he had said something humorous.

"That's one thing I should have cautioned Bruce about," said Frank. "He ought to be back early and get his regular sleep, to do his best work. We must all get to bed early. I have promised myself that we will handsomely defeat the Rapids to-morrow."

"Of course we will!" Danny declared, thumping his chest.

"We're all right, if nothing happens to Merry," Hodge admitted, with a feeling of uneasiness. "Somehow, I feel that something is going to happen."

"Of course," squeaked Bink. "Things always hap-

pen. This would be a funny world if things should stop happening!"

"Well, it won't be funny when it does happen!" Bart grumbled. "I am sure of that."

"Brace up!" Frank commanded. "You'll not be ready for your part to-morrow, if you let yourself get blue. We are all right, and I'm sure I do not worry about Hammerswell nor this mysterious rope-walker. We must think only of doing up the Rapids. Now, I'm going to bed, and you fellows must clear out!"

CHAPTER VIII.

FRANK'S DEADLY PERIL.

"The camera fiends ought to be here!" said Frank, the next day, as he stood with Browning and Hodge and looked out on the plunging green waters of the great Horseshoe Falls, from the Canada shore. They were on the rocks close up to the falls, with a precipitous descent below. The roar of the great falls was thunderous, and the rising mist of spray curled a ribbon of rainbow over the rocks and waters near-by. Browning stood with his arms folded placidly across his broad chest.

"It's wonderful!" he admitted. "Yet, really, it is not so sublime as I had expected. I suppose that's because I've read such highly-colored descriptions of it."

"Many feel that way when they first see the falls. I did, myself, for I've been here before. But the sublimity and grandeur of it grows on you. Hour by hour as you look at it you feel more and more that there surely can be nothing like it in the world. There is but one Niagara!"

"I wish it were all American!" said Hodge, also touched by what he beheld.

"That's a very natural feeling. I presume the people on this side wish it were all Canadian. It is all American in the larger sense, though not all United

States. There is enough of it for us to share it with our Canadian friends and neighbors."

"If a fellow should go over those falls or tumble off these rocks, he'd never live to tell the tale!" said Browning.

"Never!"

"And men have gone into it!" commented Hodge.

"And people have jumped into it with suicidal intent!" added Merry.

"Ugh! It makes me shudder!" said Browning.

For half an hour they stood there talking, while the waters plunged and roared and the little rainbow shifted and changed with the shifting spray, now and then fading out to return again as clouds passed from the face of the sun.

Though the noise of the waters drowned smaller sounds, Bruce at last turned suddenly, fancying he heard a quick, heavy step. As he did so, a man, whom he did not get to see clearly, pushed him violently aside and sprang by him.

"Look out, Merry!" Bruce warningly called, for the man seemed to be lunging at Merriwell. The man tripped as he shot by Bruce, and, striking Frank heavily, went over the rocks with a slide and a bounce, shooting out and downward into the great chasm that roared and seethed below.

A cry went up from the lips of Hodge, for Merriwell appeared to be following the man. Merriwell

had been hurled from his balance, and now, with hands clutching at the air, reeled backward to seeming death. For a moment he swayed on the awful verge, then toppled backward.

"My God! he's gone over!" Hodge shrieked in a paroxysm, as he bounded toward the dangerous spot.

Browning leaped forward with a groan. Neither the unknown nor Frank was to be seen.

"Merriwell!" Bart cried, while his heart seemed to still its beating.

It was a cry of agony. Instantly there was an answering cry that made Hodge bend eagerly forward.

Bruce's strong form was shaking, and his face was as white as ashes. All the strength seemed to have deserted his massive limbs, and he appeared to be powerless to utter a word. But he started forward, too, when he heard that cry.

"Didn't you hear that, Bruce?"

"Yes; it was Frank!"

"Merriwell! Merriwell! Where are you?"

"Right here!"

Bart leaned farther over and saw Frank clinging to a ledge, while beside him a piece of broken bush showed how he had stopped his awful fall. He had caught the bush, which was growing in a fissure of the rock, and while its strength was not sufficient to resist the wrench to which it was subjected, it had checked his descent and hurled him against the rocks,

and upon this ledgy table. It was a narrow place, however, where he clung, and it did not seem possible that he could hold on long. The shock and surprise must have weakened him, too.

All this passed through Hodge's mind, as his eyes fell on the friend he had thought gone to death—the awful death in Niagara!

Browning was at Hodge's side, and dropping down he crawled to the edge of the rocks and looked over at Frank. Then he glanced about. No more than two or three feet away were two out-thrust projections of rock directly over Merriwell's head.

"If I only had a rope!" he exclaimed, glancing farther.

"Probably one can be had in the village," said Bart, nodding toward the houses not far away.

Bruce was still looking about, with a greedy glance that took in everything.

"We haven't time to go for a rope! Something must be done at once."

He drew his knife and leaped toward a bushy tree that was not distant. With strokes that threatened to snap the knife-blade, he cut and tore loose a slender limb. It did not seem strong, but it was the only one long enough, and he had no time to waste in looking for another. With this limb he bounded back.

Bart was calling encouragingly to Frank; for,

though Frank was not distant, as distance is reckoned downward, the roar of the falls made it necessary for Bart to elevate his voice to be understood. Bruce came back with great leaps, closing his knife as he ran.

"Is he all right?"

"He's still there!" Bart panted.

Merriwell looked upward and saw the brave, strong face of Bruce Browning above him. Bruce was on the projecting point of rocks, one foot on each point, and was lowering the slender limb down to him.

Merriwell's heart leaped. The blow that had been given him, the suddenness of that backward reeling fall, had shaken even his strong nerves; for when he felt his feet leaving the rocks he believed that he was shooting downward to his death, as had the man who had struck or fallen against him. The clutching at the bush was only an act of instinct. He had not even closely noted that it was there, while viewing the falls. He had clung to it, and it had hurled him to the shelf to which he now clung. But he had felt his strength failing him; though, even then, once his fingers could touch something solid, his was not a spirit to despair.

The weakness seemed to leave him when he beheld Bruce with that swaying, slender branch. It appeared to be a fragile thing, but the sight of it brought the blood back to his heart—and he actually smiled!

But what of that other man? Even when he felt

himself falling, Frank had asked that question of himself. Who was the man who had plunged downward to his death? Was it a suicidal plunge? Was it an accident? Or did the man rush upon him with the intention of throwing him from the rocks, and because of a stumble had gone down himself? And if any one had rushed at him murderously, who could it have been? These thoughts were still with him as he looked at Bruce—had been with him while he heard Bart calling, and tried to answer the calls.

“Can you get hold of this?” Bruce shouted, motioning at the same time to Hodge, and thrusting the pole downward. “Can you get hold of it and hang onto it?”

Bart appeared near Browning, just at one side and a little to the rear. He had taken hold of Browning, to act as a brace as his friend leaned over to lower the limb. Then Bruce got flat down on his face and pushed the pole down until Merriwell was able to get hold of it.

“Hang on!” he heard Bruce call.

Frank glanced quickly about. There was no other way to escape from his position. If time had served, something better than this limb might have been procured—even a rope ladder might have been lowered. But Bruce was right. Frank realized that he was weak, as he took hold of the limb and clung to it.

He could not hang long on that narrow shelf, for he

was not able to change his position nor stand upright, because above him was only the sheer, outward-thrust face of rock.

But would the branch support him? It was a question he dared not answer. The branch looked to be fearfully slender.

Then the weakness seemed to clear out of his nerves, and the queer, numb feeling out of his brain. His native resolution and iron determination returned. He was again Merriwell, steel-hearted in the face of danger and undaunted by any obstacle. Could he get out of there? Yes, he would get out of there! Would the slender limb support him? He would so aid himself with feet and hands that it must support him. Could Bruce, assisted by Hodge, draw him up? He would so assist them by climbing and by digging with his feet against the granite, that they would find the task within their strength. Yes, he would escape from the death that threatened. He was again Merriwell!

With Bart Hodge acting as a brace to support him and also to assist him with the pole, Bruce Browning slowly rose to his feet, with Merriwell at the end of the pole; and then, by bringing into play every ounce of his enormous strength, he lifted Merriwell inch by inch and foot by foot, while Frank aided himself and his friends all he could.

Great as was the combined strength of Browning and Hodge, they found their strength and skill tested

to the uttermost. Once the limb was heard to snap, and they felt it slip and stretch under the strain.

Their faces whitened, and they stopped pulling and shouted a warning to Frank. But he was aware of the peril. He had felt the limb stretch and give like a rope whose strands are about to part. He had realized the danger and—he could do nothing!

“Heave away!” he called, and his tones showed nothing of the knowledge he had of his deadly peril.

And Bruce and Bart hauled away, with all their might, though as gently as they could. Again Merriwell ascended. Inch by inch again, with many jerks and slowings; at last to be seized by Browning and drawn out upon the rocks.

“Safe! safe!” cried Bart, and there was a choking sob in his voice.

“Yes, safe!” said Browning, and he put a trembling hand across his moist eyes!

“Could that have been Skaggs who went into the river?” Hodge asked a moment later.

“Impossible!” Bruce answered. “The fellow had two good legs!”

CHAPTER IX.

TRACK ATHLETICS.

The mystery concerning the man who had gone to his death in the Niagara was still unsolved when the hour approached for the contests between the Yale Athletic Team and the Niagara Rapids. The authorities had been notified of the occurrence, and Merriwell and others had visited Skaggs' temporary home in the Falls city. The visit had only deepened the mystery. Skaggs was not there, neither was Nell, nor could they be found. If Skaggs had gone into the river, what had become of Nell?

Hodge was anxious, as the Yale team came upon the field. He saw that Frank had not recovered from the effects of that awful fall, and Browning was complaining of a weak shoulder resulting from the wrenching and strain of his herculean exertions.

"Can't the thing be put over until to-morrow, Merry?" Bart asked. "Neither you nor Browning are in condition. We're going to be beaten."

"I don't think we will be beaten, and I sha'n't ask for time. It would be taken as a confession of weakness. We can beat the Rapids for all of their name and boasting. We can beat them this afternoon, and we're going to do it!"

An immense crowd had gathered on the field, drawn

there to a considerable extent by the fame of Merriwell and by the fact that the local team was immensely popular and supposed to be almost invincible. Several Yale men who chanced to be visiting the Falls came out with Merriwell's crowd, and were wildly enthusiastic for the Yale champions.

"It wouldn't do to disappoint this crowd," said Frank. "Where are Carker and Rattleton?"

"They didn't start with us from the hotel," said Bink.

This seemed strange; but it seemed even stranger when the hour for the beginning of the contests came and the two were still away.

"Oh, we're just as good!" declared Bink, cocking his cap on the back of his head and trying to look fiercely significant. "Danny and I are their substitutes, and we can fill their shoes, you bet!"

"It's no use to go into the thing, if Rattles and Carker don't get here!" Hodge fumed. "I don't understand it."

"Neither do I," Frank admitted. "But we'll have to go on without them."

The sprinting-races were to come first, beginning with the hundred-yards dash. The contestants had been running and leaping and working off some of their surplus enthusiasm in warming up, and came up to the mark in excellent condition for the dash.

Danny and Bink were in this, competing with the little fellows of the Rapids team; and they lost.

"Oh, we'll do better, when we're running for somebody else," Danny chirped. "We don't especially care to cover ourselves with glory; but when it comes to maintaining the honor of friends, you'll find us there."

"Shut up!" groaned Gamp. "You'll be there—away bub-bub-behind, as you was this tut-time!"

The small boys were not giving much attention to the little jokers, to the annoyance of both Bink and Danny.

"We'll have to start an athletic team of our own!" said Bink, somewhat enviously. "We'll call it the Stubbs-Griswold combination!"

"I guess not! Put your name at the head?" said Danny. "Well, I don't think!"

"Shut up!" commanded Gamp. "If you dud-don't both shut up, I'll throw you into the ruh-river!"

As the river was some distance away, this seemed as much of a feat as some of the things that Danny and Bink often boasted of doing.

"Why don't Carker and Rattles get here?" grumbled Hodge.

"Something must have happened to them," said Merriwell. "I begin to think that. They wouldn't remain away without good cause."

"Are you going to send some one to look them up?"

"Not yet. Perhaps they'll come. And I really don't know where to send. It's said they weren't at the hotel when we left."

Danny and Bink were entered in the next race, which was a 220-yards dash, as the substitutes of Carker and Rattleton; and, in spite of their boasting, they were defeated in this.

"We're in the soup!" squealed Bink. "If we couldn't win, there isn't any use in any of the rest of you trying!"

Jack Ready came up chirping, to race against Fred Beverly in the 440-yards dash.

"Send for the brass band!" said Ready.

"What fuf-for?" demanded Gamp.

"Why, when I pull away from our friend Beverly and stretch my legs for home, I want to hear the delightful strains of 'See the Conquering Hero Comes!' What's the use of running if there are to be no bay leaves and laurel and all that at the end of the track? Send for the band."

Ready was really a fine runner, and Merriwell was putting a good deal of faith in his performance. The starter stepped into position behind them with ready pistol; the crowd yelled. This was followed by the starter's pistol-shot; and away they went.

Ready came down the cinder-path with legs flying, but Beverly was the speedier runner, and he beat Ready out by at least ten feet.

"Now if you had the bub-bub-band!"

"I'd have it play the 'Dead March'!" chirped Ready.

"I was defeated simply because I was beaten."

"By gum! I guess that's right!"

Then the lank New Hampshire youth muttered under his breath.

"And it lul-looks tarnation like we're going to bubble beat all out this afternoon!"

"Why don't Carker and Rattles come?" Hodge groaned. "Carker is a good man at the hurdles. We'll be defeated sure!"

But if Merriwell was uneasy he did not show it.

"I'd give something handsome myself to know where they are," he replied to Hodge. "Go out there and send that cabman to the hotel to see if they've got in yet."

Bart darted away to obey the order. This was making an effort at least, and he was so anxious and uneasy that it did him good to give the cabman hurry orders.

"We aren't beaten yet!" Frank said to Hodge, as the latter returned. "I'd like to know what has happened to Rattleton and Carker, but we're not defeated yet. Don't get into a stew!"

CHAPTER X.

STILL ABSENT.

The local team was feeling jubilant. Why, this Yale team was dead easy! They had won from the Merriwells everything so far, and it looked as if they would make a clean sweep. They began to talk loud, while their friends were roaring for them, and the few Yale men and other adherents of the Yale boys were feeling gloomy. But Frank retained his serenity, and insisted to his friends that nothing alarming had yet occurred.

"If Rattleton and Carker get here, we're all right!"

"And if they don't get here?" queried Bruce, whose shoulder was weak and painful.

"We'll try to do the fellows up, anyway. I think we can!"

Alas! Rattleton was not there to whoop things up and offer to bet unlimited sums, whether he had them or not, that the Yale team would win simply because Merriwell said so, and Merriwell always knew. Truly, what had become of the faithful fellow and their new and recently mysterious friend, Greg Carker? No one could tell.

Swiftwing was saying nothing. Whether he was uneasy or not could not be determined by his appearance. He was again Sphinxlike in his demeanor. He

had returned to the team, with his good name clear, and the other members who had suspected him had tried to show that they appreciated the fact that he was all right, and was to remain with them as an honored member; all of which he had taken in a mysteriously Indian way that made it difficult to say just what his real feelings were. As for Lucy Livingston, he had not mentioned her name since leaving the Adirondacks.

Joe Gamp came up to compete with Allerton Stoddard, who was thought to be the fastest and best runner in the Niagara Rapids, though, perhaps, not the equal of Red Arrow, the Oneida, who had been added to the team to offset Swiftwing and make ten men. Red Arrow was said to be as fleet as the wind.

"You can play the 'Dead March' for Gamp when he starts out, and 'See the Conquering Hero Comes!' as he nears the line," said Hodge, who felt better when Gamp's time came, for he knew that Gamp was a runner. "It takes the fellow half the stretch to get his long legs in good working order."

Gamp was "haw-hawing," while the crowd yelled and geyed.

"Why, you never saw me run?" he bellowed. "I'm the dud-dud-dish-washer that ran away with the spoon!"

"And you're the cow that jumped over the moon!" some one shouted back.

Gamp turned slowly round and stared in the direction of the speaker.

"Nun-nun-no! But I'm the little dog that'll lullough when I see you fuf-fellows dud-done up, as you're goin' to be! Come on with your fuf-flyers. I'm ruh-ruh-ready——"

"No, that's my name!" Jack chirped as Gamp's tongue stuck and buzzed over the word.

"I'm ruh-ready for 'em," said Gamp. "Bring 'em on!"

Stoddard looked the born runner, every inch of him. He was spare, but not a weakling, for his muscle movement showed that what there was of him was muscle and not inert tissue, and his step was light and elastic.

"Gamp won't have a show against Allerton," was the word that went round. "The Merriwells are bound to lose again!"

Hodge heard it, and set his teeth, while a dark look came to his face. Merriwell heard it, and seemed not to hear. Gamp and Stoddard were in position for the 880-yard run. For an instant they strained like hounds in the leash. Then the pistol cracked and they were away like a flash.

The sympathizers and friends of the local team began to howl, for it was seen that right at the start Allerton was ahead. He kept ahead and seemed to gain.

He was indeed a fine runner, and he came along in an easy, confident way.

Suddenly a shout came from the grim lips of Bart Hodge. Gamp had spurted and was drawing up alongside of his opponent.

"That's Gamp!" Hodge cried, while his face brightened and his eyes flashed. "You are all right, old man, and I knew you were!"

"See them long legs fly! The fellow is waking up!" a bystander exclaimed, rousing to the fact that the awkward racer was actually gaining on the fleet Stoddard.

"Go it!" yelled Danny.

"Break your back, you snail!" howled Bink.

"He's passing him!" screeched Ready, for once forgetting his bantering air. "Come along, you dear old lout! Come along!"

And Gamp came along. His feet moved faster and faster. He forged by Stoddard. Then he began to leave him behind. And he crossed the line a handsome winner.

A great roar went up from the Yale men and their friends, who had not before been given a chance to exert themselves in this line, and this roar was joined in by the mob of boys who had gathered and were nearly all Merriwell enthusiasts.

Frank looked round and saw the chagrined face of Herbert Hammerswell.

"So you're here, are you?" Frank muttered grimly. "I was beginning to think that it might have been you who went into Niagara in an attempt to push me in. But it's said that the devil takes care of his own!"

The more he thought about it, the more Merriwell was inclined to believe that a murderous attempt had been made against his life. He might have thought the man was Rodney Skaggs, but Bruce and Bart agreed that the man who fell into the river had two legs.

"Oh, the Merriwell crowd can't win!" Herbert began to declare to all who would listen to his talk. "I know the fellers, and they are simply bluffers."

"But how about their victories up in the Adirondacks?" a man inquired.

"And what about Merriwell?" a boy howled. "Go soak yer head! You've got bugs!"

"Merriwell is nothing but a braggart! Just a bag of wind!"

"If I was a little bigger I'd belt ye in ther jaw fer that!" another boy threatened. "You're just a big stiff. Go off somewhere and die!"

Hammerswell glowered at the boys in a threatening manner, and Delancy Livingston put up his eye-glass as if he desired to inspect some new kind of insect that threatened to sting him.

"Aw! Just a lot of poor boys! Children of work-

ing people, no doubt! I wouldn't pay any attention to them, Hammy, dear, don't you know!"

"Hammy, dear, don-cher-know!" howled the boys. "Git onto the curves of the dudes! Hammy, dear, don-cher-know that you're a fool?"

"Do yer turn up yer trousers w'en it rains in Lunnon?" another boy cuttingly asked. "Ther Prince o' Wales is inquirin' fer you be cable!"

"Wants to put 'im in the Zoo!"

Hammerswell and Delancy beat a retreat, but the boys followed and continued to guy them until the announcement of the next race was made.

One thing was noticeable. Hammerswell did not venture to utter his sneers in the presence of Bart Hodge or any of Merriwell's men. Hodge would fight at a word, and Hammerswell knew it and feared him. Hodge was not giving any attention to Hammerswell and Delancy. He was thinking of Rattleton and Carker, and groaning because they were away.

"What has become of Rattles and Carker?" he asked for the hundredth time.

And no one could answer him. The cabman had come back with the report that they had not returned to the hotel.

CHAPTER XI.

A STUNNING CHARGE.

"One-mile run. John Swiftwing against Red Arrow!"

This was the next announcement, and it was greeted with cheers. Swiftwing was as splendid a specimen of physical Indian development as was ever seen. He was simply a red Apollo, with the eye and ear of a deer, and the feet of a Mercury. Red Arrow, the civilized Oneida who was to run against him, was somewhat taller and more slender and gave every evidence of wonderful ability as a runner. It was claimed for him that he was the best mile-runner in the State of New York.

He looked confident as he stepped into position for the start. And the chances did seem in his favor; for, while Swiftwing was the more magnificently developed, an unbiased judge would have selected Red Arrow as the better runner.

"Gamp has turned the tide in our favor," said Bruce. "I feel that Swiftwing will beat him."

"If I could recollect the name of the deity that used to preside over the runners in the halcyon days of the godlike Greeks," Ready was chirping, "I would send him a prayer for Swiftwing's success. But my memory gets treacherous as I grow toward the age of the

sere and yellow. Anyway, Swiftwing, we want you to bring in the laurel!"

"Bub-bub-bub-beat him, John!" yelled Gamp.

"We're betting our little pile on you!" Danny and Bink were squealing.

"Swiftwing will give a good account of himself!" said Merriwell.

Bang!

The pistol cracked, and the runners leaped away, while the crowd began to cheer.

Both were running easily and apparently not very rapidly. A hundred men were holding watches on them, in addition to the official timekeepers. The track was nearly circular and half a mile long. At the quarter, Swiftwing sprang into the lead, which he continued to hold until the half-mile had been passed, going by the yelling crowd with an easy swing that seemed to indicate no exertion, with Red Arrow coming along behind him in the same way. But the watches told a different story. That peculiar Indian lope was wonderfully deceptive. The runners were getting over the ground in fast time.

Red Arrow spurred in the beginning of the second half, and passed Swiftwing. Then the crowd woke up and began to howl. Swiftwing was seen struggling to get into his old position, but Red Arrow, having the inner side, held it. And thus they turned

the third quarter and came down on the homestretch. Both were running faster than at first.

"Get a move on you!" Danny screeched.

Merriwell funneled his hands and called:

"Swiftwing!"

The word seemed to have an arousing effect. The Pueblo's speed instantly increased. He pulled up inch by inch. He passed the Oneida, who was going like the wind, and continued to gain. The boys were now whooping and howling. No one seemed to be silent except the men who were studying the watches.

"Cuc-cuc-come home!" screamed Gamp, flapping his arms up and down like the wings of a rooster. "Cuc-cuc-come home! That's the stuff! He cuc-cuc-can't bub-bub-bub-beat you. Cuc-cuc-cuc-come home!"

He danced up and down in his excitement; then his "haw-haw" rent the air.

For Swiftwing was "coming home," and he was coming like the wind. He had not looked finer when he stood on that high bluff in the Adirondacks nor when he made his magnificent dive. With head thrown back and chest pushed out; with his arms drawn up and his feet moving like piston-rods and seemingly as tireless, he came down the homestretch in such a magnificent burst of speed that the whole crowd rose up and greeted him with cheers.

Three races had been lost and two won—won handsomely.

"Oh, we're all right!" Bink chattered.

"I'm feeling better, thank you!" said Bruce, taking out his pipe for a smoke.

"But why doesn't Carker and Rattles come?" queried Hodge. "Carker is in the hurdles and he ought to be here! And so is Rattleton!"

"Refuse me, but I'm in the hurdles, too!" said Ready complacently.

"And that makes the thing safe!" Bruce growled, for his shoulder pained him, though he was not saying much about it.

"Sure! I'm a bird!"

"You'd get along better if you were a deer or a toad. That business requires some hopping, I tell you!" said Danny.

As Merriwell was to take part in the hurdles the hopes of the Athletic Team went up a number of points. The enthusiasm of the spectators was wrought to a high pitch by the low and high hurdle events, for half the men of each team took part. In each there were four trial heats and a final heat. In the final heat of the high hurdles, in a run of 120 yards, in which Merriwell did not take part, Gamp and Swift-wing tripped by striking hurdles, and Red Arrow won the event in sixteen and one-half seconds.

The final heat of the low hurdles—distance 220 yards—was closely contested toward the end of the run by Merriwell and Red Arrow. Each of the pre-

ceding trial heats had been won within seventeen seconds, and Red Arrow had showed such gain in running and leaping ability that many believed he would surely win this time. But Merriwell did not knock down a hurdle, while Red Arrow bowled over two; and Merriwell won out in twenty-six and one-fifth seconds, amid a furore of wild cheering.

Then there were other events as interesting, if not so exciting: Broad jumping and high jumping, pole vaulting and other things.

"A tie! a tie!" was yelled as these ended.

"A tie, and only three more events."

Then Frank put his team ahead by winning the discus throw.

But Hodge looked troubled. The two events to come were putting the shot and throwing the hammer, in both of which Bruce Browning was to contest against Horace Bridgman, the giant of the Niagara Rapids.

"I shouldn't be afraid if Bruce's shoulder were all right! But I can see that it's been hurting him all the afternoon, though he has kept pretty still about it.

"How is the shoulder, Bruce?" he asked, approaching Browning, as the latter was getting in readiness in the dressing-tent.

"Bad!" confessed the Yale giant. "I never had it feel so weak. But I'll do my best!"

There could be no doubt of that. Bruce always

did his best, when his best seemed necessary. Bink and Danny looked fearful when Bridgman came out of the dressing-tents for the shot-putting event. He seemed so much bigger and stronger than when dressed in ordinary clothing. He possessed immense strength, and they did not wonder that the Rapids were pinning their faith to him and declaring that he could not be beaten in the two final contests, in which he was to meet Bruce.

If Frank Merriwell was made uneasy by the appearance of the giant Bridgman and the cheers of his friends, or by the knowledge that Bruce's shoulder was out of condition, there was nothing in his face to reveal it.

"Now we'll see Bruce do him up!" cried Bink, prancing round as if he were the hero of the occasion, while he puffed furiously at a cigarette.

"He'll never beat Bridgman!" a Rapids man declared. "You haven't a man that can beat Bridgman. We have got you fellows, now!"

"Not Merry?" squealed Bink. "Do you mean to say that Merry can't beat him?"

The speaker gave Merriwell a scornful glance. Frank did not look to be a great shot-putter and hammer-thrower.

"Yes. Anybody you've got. Bridgman is simply immense!"

There was silence and almost breathless interest as

Bridgman took the shot and prepared to throw. It was hurled through the air with mighty force.

"Thirty-nine feet, five inches!" said the measurers.

"Wee-e-e!" Danny squealed. "We've got you!"

He began to feel safe, for Bruce's shot-putting record was over forty-one feet, and his hammer-throwing record was away up. Then Browning hurled the shot through the air. Instantly it was seen that he had lost.

The announcement of the distance, "thirty-five feet, six inches," was drowned in the cheers of the confident Niagaras. And in the following trials he was easily defeated, to the dismay of his friends.

The hammer-throw was to come next and last. Bruce went over to Merriwell.

"I can't do it, Merry!" he said. "If they will let you, I want you to take my place."

But to this there was an instant protest.

"There was to be no substitutes in this!" shouted the captain of the Niagaras.

"Then you will win by a forfeit," said Frank.

"Bruce's shoulder is wrenched and he can't throw!"

"Oh, I'll try!" Bruce grunted, as he listened to the clamor of the opposition.

Then an officer, who had been standing on the edge of the crowd, pushed forward, laid his hand on Bruce's shoulder, and said:

"I arrest you for the murder of Rodney Skaggs!"

CHAPTER XII.

FRANK MERRIWELL'S THROW.

This was followed by a whirlwind of excitement. Browning arrested for murder! What did it mean? Skaggs was the wooden-legged rope-walker who called himself the "One-legged Blondin!" How had he been killed? What grudge had Browning against him?

These and a hundred other questions, spoken and unspoken, filled the minds and mouths of the seething, curiosity-consumed crowd.

"This is some of Hammerswell's work!" cried Hodge, looking furiously round. Hammerswell heard him and hastily left the crowd with Delancy, making a bee-line for his hotel and room.

"What's the meaning of that?" he asked Delancy, as they hurried on. "Browning has killed Skaggs?"

"Aw! that's too much for me, don't you know! I thought Skaggs was to do up Merriwell!"

"So he was! I don't understand it."

There were others who did not understand it. Bruce Browning did not understand it, for one; nor did Frank Merriwell.

"This is a ridiculous charge!" Frank asserted to the officer.

"Not so ridiculous as you think, young man!"

Skaggs' body has been found in the river, and Browning was seen quarreling with him last evening! Any way, I've my orders and my warrant for the arrest. If you don't want trouble, you'll let him come along peaceably with me."

He had a feeling that Merriwell's crowd would try to prevent Bruce's detention, and glared round threateningly as he said this.

"There is some big mistake here!" Merriwell declared. "But of course we do not intend to resist an officer. He will go with you. But he was just getting ready to throw the hammer. It is the next and last event. If you will let him do that!"

"Not on your life!" cried the officer, gripping Bruce's collar. "He goes with me, instanter. This is a murder charge, young man! You know what that means?"

Then what a howl of indignant protest went up from the Niagara Rapids and their friends!

"This is just a trick, Merriwell!" said the captain. "You have foreseen all along that you would be defeated, and you have planned this to break into the games, so that the contests could not be concluded, and——"

"Stop!" Frank commanded. "If you repeat that, I shall have to tell you that you lie!"

The Niagara captain grew white, but he saw that Merriwell meant it.

"What does it mean, then?"

"You know as much as I. Browning has been arrested for the murder of the rope-walker. We know nothing about it, and of course it's a foolish charge; but I want you distinctly to understand that there is no collusion in this matter."

"Well, what about the hammer-throw?"

"Just as you like! Call it off and take the game, if you want to. I suppose you are entitled to do that, if you press the point. There was no understanding that a substitute might be used; they were used in the other events without your protest. But let it go!"

"Who will throw the hammer against Bridgman?"

"I will!"

"Are you really a hammer-thrower?"

"Not my particular line, but I've thrown the hammer. We'll try it, if you're willing!"

"Oh, that's all right, Swengle!" the Rapids began to call. "He can't touch Bridgman. It's the easiest way to settle it. Let him try. He knows that neither he nor Browning can come near Bridgman. It will shut his mouth to let him try, that's all!" Hodge could hardly restrain himself from leaping at the throats of these men, while the other members of the Athletic Team were equally indignant.

"Let Merriwell throw!" the Rapids were roaring.

"Let him try it. Bridgman will just play with him.

Hurrah for Bridgman! Hurrah for the Niagara Rapids!"

"All right," said Swengle, the captain, speaking to Frank. "If you want to act as Browning's substitute, you may, without further objections from us."

"And the winner of this throw wins for his team in these contests?"

"Certainly! The teams are now tied."

Hodge gave a yell of triumph. The officer, seeing that there was to be no fight, began to push through the crowd with Browning.

Merriwell hurried to Bruce's side.

"Hodge and Ready will go with you, and I'll be along just as soon as I have made the throw. You're all right, old man. It's a ridiculous charge."

"Just win that hammer-throw for me!" said Bruce, with the utmost composure. "I'm willing to be arrested if it gives you a chance to win that and shuts the mouths of that howling mob."

"He's sure to win it!" cried Hodge.

"You bet!" squealed Bink.

Danny began singing:

"Of athletes all, who is the king?

Our Merriwell! Our Merriwell!

The Rapids think they are the thing!

Oh, hear them yell! oh, hear them yell!

But Frank's the man to turn the tide,

Oh, he's the boy to tan their hide!

Oh, he's the pin who'll prick their pride!

Our Merriwell! Our Merriwell!"

The whole Merriwell crowd bellowed the refrain, to the familiar tune of "Maryland, My Maryland"!

"Win her out!" Bruce shouted back, as the refrain died, and he walked on with the officer, accompanied by Bart and Ready. "You're the boy to do it!"

But Bridgman came up confident and smiling. He felt that he had easy work. Who was Merriwell, anyway? He had no record as a hammer-thrower. He had heard of Browning's work in that line, for he tried to keep posted as to the work of the hammer-throwers of the different colleges. But Merriwell!

"That's right! Howl now!" cried the captain of the Niagaras to the bellowing singers. "It's well to howl in advance, for you won't have anything to howl about soon."

He was so wrought up that he was tempted to shake his fist in the faces of the crowd that was still bellowing, led by Bink and Danny. It had been agreed that but a single trial should be made by each contestant. Notwithstanding that he felt safe, Bridgman, who was a cautious fellow, put every ounce of strength into his throw, beating his previous performance.

"One hundred and forty-one feet, six inches!" was the announcement.

It was a fine throw and brought cheers. Then Merriwell stepped into the circle and took up the hammer. The singing ceased and silence reigned.

Frank had donned his athletic suit, and those versed

in such things were surprised by the muscular development which he now displayed. Three times the heavy hammer swung round Merriwell's head, then he let it go over his shoulder.

A shout went up, for it was seen that he had not only beaten Bridgman's performance, but that he must have crowded the world's records, which are 167 feet, 8 inches, held by John Flanagan of the New York Athletic Club, and the new inter-collegiate record of 165 feet and a half-inch, made at Philadelphia, in May of this year, by A. Plaw of the University of California, in the field contests of that university against the University of Pennsylvania.

"One hundred and sixty-two feet, three inches!"

That was the record, and it was received with wild howling, while Danny and Bink and the others began to sing again, "Our Merriwell! Our Merriwell!"

* * * * *

If Bruce had not gone to that masked ball on the Canadian side disguised to look like Strong Arm, he would not have been arrested. He was not held, for the charge against him was quickly shown to be a flimsy thing.

And Rodney Skaggs? Yes, he was the man, crazed by drink, who had tried to hurl Merriwell into Niagara and had gone in himself. When the body was discovered it was clothed in garments which he had never been known to wear, and on the stump of his

leg was a cork leg, placed there to aid in concealing his identity. It had fooled Bart and Bruce into believing that the man who went over the rocks into the river had two good legs. The wooden leg was found in the house which Skaggs had occupied. The "dynamite" was a bluff, pure and simple. The inside of the glass supposed to contain dynamite was coated with a preparation of the color of dynamite, and within the glass itself was a wad of counterfeit bills, for Skaggs had been a "shover of the queer," along with his occupation as a rope-walker.

Of course, the murder charge against Browning was proven false. The person seen quarreling with Skaggs was without doubt the real Indian, Strong Arm.

Carker and Rattleton had been led away from the contests by hearing that Dot, the child, had been taken by Skaggs from the woman with whom she had been left; and, thinking they were on the trail, they had felt it to be their duty to push the pursuit while the trail seemed fresh, rather than risk losing it, even if the contests should be lost to the Athletic Team in consequence, and Merriwell told them afterward that in following this conviction they did right.

But the child had not been taken by Skaggs. She had been stolen out by Nell, who believed it the only way to save her from her father's fury.

As for Carker's mysterious connection with the

rope-walker, it dated back to a strike in the city of New York. Carker's sympathies had led him to side with the strikers, even going so far as to make a doubtful use of money in their behalf. Skaggs, as a professed workingman, had played upon Carker's sympathies at that time, and had received from him various sums, all of which he pocketed, of course, for he cared nothing for honest labor—which Greg Carker did. Carker was often queer and odd, but usually his heart was right, when its kindly instincts were not smothered by parsimoniousness.

"I was simply ashamed to tell you before," said Carker, when he explained this to Frank. "I was a fool!"

Dot Skaggs was placed again in the home that had been secured for her by Carker; and a position was found for Nell through the efforts of friends.

But Skaggs, the rope-walker, had gone to his death in Niagara, and nobody was sorry. The hotel proprietor, who was a Merriwell enthusiast, laid in another supply of fireworks and employed skilled help to turn out something fine. For a centerpiece appeared the head of Frank Merriwell, over an arch of burning letters, which spelled out in fiery tracery these words:

FRANK MERRIWELL'S ATHLETIC TEAM VICTORIOUS!

CHAPTER XIII.

IN THE CAVE OF THE WINDS.

"A circular rainbow!"

"I never saw anything like it!"

Merriwell, Hodge, Rattleton, Browning, Carker, Swiftwing, and some others had descended from the dressing-rooms into the misty spray between Luna and Goat Islands on their way to the Cave of the Winds a few evenings later, and as they glanced about and upward each seemed to be looking into the center of a small, circular rainbow.

"This is Niagara!" exclaimed Frank. "The great and only Niagara!"

"Worth circling the world to see!" declared Carker, the bored look going out of his face.

"And it belonged to the Indian before it did to the white man!" said Swiftwing, softly, a strange light in his dark, wet face. "It was the Indian's Niagara."

"And now it is the world's Niagara," said Browning, forgetting that he had ever been lazy and uninterested. "The only objectionable thing is that the sight of it makes a man realize how little and weak he is, after all!"

"I knew that the feeling of the greatness and stupendousness of Niagara would grow on you," was Merry's answer, as his chest heaved.

"I never heard of the circular rainbow," said Bart.

"I saw it when I was here before. It is not always to be seen, of course. Only when the sun shines through the spray in this way. A great many people come here and never see it at all, because the conditions are not right. Very often the weather is cloudy, or the sun not in the best position."

The beauty and novelty of the scene thrilled them. The roar of the falls just at hand—a section of the American falls—under which they were to walk in a few moments, dinned their ears.

"This cakes the take—I mean takes the cake!" Rattleton at last broke out. "I never saw anything like it."

The guide bunched the sightseers together and led them across the wet, slippery rocks toward the falls and the Cave of the Winds.

"See here!" cried Bart, clutching Merriwell's arm. "Did you see that fellow? Wasn't that Hammerswell?"

A young man in oilskins had appeared for a moment close up to the cliff, standing, as it seemed, at the very edge of the falls. For a moment he stood there, and then drew back out of sight, seeming to have been swallowed by the downward rushing waters.

"I didn't see him well. Perhaps it was Hammerswell."

"He has been under the falls and was coming out with those other people, or rather after them; and when he saw us he stooped down and then went back out of sight. I am sure it was Hammerswell."

"And if it was Hammerswell he'll be up to hurt—I mean he will be up to dirt!" Rattleton asserted.

"He'll get hurt," Bart growled.

"You're hot."

"The sight of him makes me wild, Merry. I believe he hired that one-legged rope-walker to try to throw you into Niagara. I can't prove it, I know, but I have that feeling in my blood."

"Skaggs received his pay!"

"Yes, the rope-walker is dead enough, but that skunk, Hammerswell, who probably hired him to try the trick, is all right yet. But there will come a settlement, if he continues to fool around us!"

Some of the women in the party had stopped to talk and rave over the scene, but the guide, who had been explaining things to them, moved on again, and Merriwell's party followed.

Back behind the falls, in the space between the wall of rock and the downward shooting water, an aerial walk had been constructed. Into this spray-filled space, where the falls roared thunderously and the brilliant sunshine was dimmed by the swaying wall, the guide led the sightseers.

"Enough to try one's nerve!" said Rattleton,

though his words were not heard. "What if a fellow should stumble? It's slippery enough in here."

Merriwell bent toward him.

"What is it, Rattles?"

"If a fellow should go off here," shouted Harry.

"Well, they could hunt for him where Skaggs' body was found. It is said that a man fell off here a few years ago."

"Ugh!"

The exclamation was drawn from Rattleton by a deluging, backward swing of the shifting green wall, which poured tubfuls of water over him.

"We'll run into Hammerswell in here," Hodge was thinking, as he clung to the railing. "I wonder how far this walk goes? That surely was Hammerswell. I couldn't have been mistaken. And why did he dive back when he saw us? Was he afraid that we would give him a thumping? Or is he planning something?"

"Seems to me it's getting worse as we go further in," Bruce grunted. "A ton of water fell on me that time. If it does get worse and Hammerswell is back in here the rascal will be drowned. These women have grit!"

Hammerswell was in there!

He had seen Merriwell's party; and, after hastily picking up a jagged piece of granite, he had retreated

behind a wall of water, filled with a sudden and desperate resolve.

He had been in a sullen rage ever since the failure of Rodney Skaggs to injure Merriwell, and, though his nerves had been shaken by the awful fate of the rope-walker, he had not been deterred from contemplating further harm to Frank, but had nursed his fancied grievances in his cowardly bitter way, only biding his time to deliver some treacherous blow which should permanently injure or kill his enemy without risking his own worthless neck. As he retreated along the seemingly insecure walk he looked craftily round, while the water deluged him.

"The party will probably stop in this hollowed out place," he muttered. "I'll wait just beyond. Merriwell is daring and adventurous. Perhaps he will push on without the guide. If he does, and I can land this rock in his back or against his head, I can knock him from this walk. And if he goes over he will be no more able to tell about it than Skaggs was."

Then he began to wonder if he dared to try this. In his calmer moments he would have shrunk from it. Sometimes he wanted to kill Frank, so deep was his hate, and at other times he desired only to work him some lasting injury. Of late he had been drinking heavily, and that made him more than usually reckless.

"If I should miss my aim and he should rush on

me and throw me over in his rage!" he gasped; and the thought almost caused him to drop the jagged rock and abandon his sudden, desperate resolve. "I might miss him! The water pours and dashes here so that no one can be sure of a safe throw!"

Nevertheless, he stood in the drenching, blinding spray that came down on him, still hesitating and undecided, with this great temptation tugging at his mean heart till it almost choked him.

"Ah! there they come!"

He drew still further back, as he beheld Merriwell's party and the others, accompanied by the guide, come into view through the spray.

That he might not be seen, he dropped flat on the walk, where he clung with one hand, while the other held the rock. An inward swirl of the water caused him to gasp and cough, but the noise was drowned by the water's roar.

Then he saw Merriwell in advance of the party, as if coming on alone.

"Dare I do it?" he whispered, while his blood seemed to chill and all his courage to be washed away by the pounding flood. "Dare I do it?"

Frank turned to walk back. The temptation was not to be resisted.

"The chance of a lifetime!" he gasped. "I may never have another like it."

Then his arm went up and the jagged bit of granite

was hurled, regardless of the fact that it might plunge into the midst of the party beyond and strike some of the women.

He cowered and put his hands to his eyes, while another inward-flung deluge covered him. He heard a sharp cry tear through the waters. Then, feeling that indeed the rock had gone true to its aim, he turned and fled hastily toward the end of the walk, though the spray seemed heavier as he proceeded and the waters appeared to reach out wet hands to catch him and drag him over the railing.

When he stopped he felt his teeth chattering. The waters seemed to have turned deathly cold, while his veins burned as if filled with liquid fire. The sunshine that came through the glassy wall looked blood red, though it was much fainter than at the point where he had hurled the stone. He clutched at the rail and listened.

"They can't prove that I did it!" he chattered. "No one saw me. Merriwell's back was turned, and the others could not see me because of the spray."

Then his imagination pictured Merriwell in the awful churning vortex at his feet, his body driven round and round and up and down like a log, sinking to the deepest depths only to shoot upward again. Once he fancied he saw it rising through the water. It came up, up, with white face and staring, glassy eyes—dead eyes, that looked into his very soul.

He shrieked and put up his hands to shut out the awful sight.

"My God! I believe I'm going crazy!" he chattered. "Of course the body couldn't rise that way. The water would beat it down, down! It would be driven to the very bottom of the river and come out far below in the Whirlpool, to be found some time, perhaps—perhaps never. It couldn't rise!"

He almost feared to look again. The spray appeared to become thicker, and the water continually reached out wet hands to tear him from his footing, and send him down into the horrible depths where he fancied Frank's body was.

"They will arrest me when I come to go out; and, of course, I must go out! Unless——"

He uttered a shriek. The wet hands seemed to take him by the hair, as the water poured over him.

"Unless I fall off. How the water pounds me! It's terrible! I can't stand it in here! I must go back!"

He started back, but the thought of what might be awaiting him at the other end sent him again into a retreat.

"I won't let them take me, if they come to this place. They sha'n't! I'll fight first! I'll throw them into the falls! They sha'n't take me! I'll never go out rather than that! Why did I do it? Yes, I'm a murderer—a murderer!"

The waters seemed saying over and over: "A murderer! A murderer!"

The spray grew colder and his veins hotter, and the sun-shot, green, liquid wall became redder and redder. His legs became so weak that he dropped down on his knees and clung there in a fit of desperation.

"I shall drown!" he moaned. "I'm drowning now!"

The spray seemed to stop up his nostrils and choke his lungs. His brain was fairly reeling, while his teeth chattered until he fancied he could hear them even in the midst of the howling torrent. How long he lay there he did not know. It seemed hours. He felt that he was dying, and this aroused his cowardly nature more than anything else could have done.

"I'm not fit to die!" he screamed. "I can't die!"

He crawled along the slippery walk, which now appeared covered with a slime that rendered every movement one of extreme peril. He fancied, time and again, that he was going down into the falls. But he crawled on, gasping, sick, weak and filled with terror. That was a dreadful crawl. He dared not rise to his feet. He feared almost to lift his head, but felt out before him as he crawled, taking firm hold each time before venturing an advance.

By and by the wall of water grew lighter. He rose to a crouching position and crawled on. Finally he made a hysterical dash, and shortly found himself in the rainbow spray outside, with not a soul in sight.

He staggered over the slippery rocks, scrambling and falling and rising again. An apparition met him in the mist. It was the white-faced guide.

"How long have you been under there?" he demanded.

"I—I don't know," Hammerswell stammered, fleeing past him and up to the shelter of a dressing-room.

How he got into his clothing he hardly knew. Wherever he looked he saw that white face and those awful eyes rising through the water. His own face, as he looked into the little mirror, changed until it was the dead face of Frank Merriwell.

"I'm going crazy!" he whispered, as he crept toward the door. "I must be! Why did I ever do that? I'll be hanged for it!"

And again the roar of the falls brought him the word, "Murderer!"

When he came out, and was stumbling away, he stopped suddenly and drew back with a wild cry of fright. Frank Merriwell appeared before him.

But Hammerswell could not believe that it was Frank. He fancied that it must be only another torturing fancy. When Frank continued to walk toward him it was too much. He threw up his hands with a shriek, and tumbled over as if dead.

CHAPTER XIV.

OLD FRIENDS.

Some men who were near leaped to the assistance of Herbert Hammerswell, and lifted him up. Bart and Frank pushed forward.

"Do you know him?" was questioned.

"Yes," said Frank. "He belongs at the hotel up there. What made him faint?"

"Hanged if I know. He looked at you, and then he tumbled over. We'll take him into the house and bring him around."

Frank assisted in carrying Hammerswell in, but Bart stood back. There seemed no need that he should offer his services, and he had no desire to touch the young villain.

"He will be all right soon," Frank announced, as he came out. "You know I told you I thought I heard something whiz by my head while we were under the falls. I believe now that Hammerswell threw something at me. He must have thought that he had killed me, or knocked me into the water; and when he saw me alive just now it was too much for him."

"I think you're right," Hodge assented.

"Perhaps he heard that woman scream, and that helped to deceive him."

"I wish we had gone back to look for him under

there," Bart growled. "We could understand this better. Hammerswell is equal to any villainy. I wonder that you felt like helping him. The only way I want to put my hands on him is to strike him in the face with my fists."

One of the women, struck by a sheet of water, had screamed and fallen, and Frank had carried her out from under the falls, so that when he and Bart thought of turning back to look for Hammerswell so much time had elapsed and so many had come out that a search seemed useless. So they had made no investigation. As they neared the hotel Harry Rattleton came out to meet them, his eyes shining.

"Say, fellows, you can't guess who is in town?"

"The president?"

"Somebody you'll be glad to see."

"Tell us, Rattles! We're not good at blind guessing."

"Juliet and Dolph Reynolds!"

"You don't mean it?"

"Sure! They passed in a carriage a while ago, and I had a talk with them. They're stopping at the International Hotel. They're doing the States, and of course they had to come to Niagara."

There was a flush of pleasure on Merriwell's cheek. It seemed good, indeed, to be able to again meet these young English people.

"In a carriage, you say? When will they be back? I shall have to call on them."

Then he gave Harry an odd look.

"Is she as handsome as she used to be, Rattles?"

Harry colored. He had not forgotten the time when he fought a duel with Jack Diamond in Paris over the English beauty.

"Grittiest pearl I ever saw—I mean the prettiest girl I ever saw!"

Then he smiled, though down deep in his honest heart there was still a sore spot.

"I think I'd fight Diamond for her again, if it were necessary."

"And Dolph?"

"The same Dolph. He had just heard of your hammer-throw in defeating the Niagara Rapids, and he wanted me to tell him all about it. Says he wishes he had been here to bet on you. He's coming over to see you when he gets back from his drive."

"Did you see Hammerswell?"

"Say, what's the matter with Ham? They just now brought him in all limp, and a doctor has been telephoned for."

While Merriwell was answering this, they were walking up the steps of the hotel, with Harry continually interjecting questions and bits of information about the English brother and sister who had so unexpectedly appeared on the scene. Bart Hodge was

not so interested, for he did not know the Reynolds, but he listened, now and then studying the shining face of Harry Rattleton.

"Hit hard," he muttered under his breath. "I'm afraid poor Rattles has got the arrow right through his gizzard. And from what Merry has said about it, I don't think she ever cared a straw for him. This is a queer world when it comes to women and love-affairs."

Then his thoughts wandered away to pretty Lucy Livingston, whom he had met in the Adirondacks, and whose brother he intensely hated; and he wondered if Juliet Reynolds could possibly be as handsome as Lucy. Bart dropped into a chair to talk to Jack Ready, who protested that he was as lonesome as Crusoe on his island, and Harry and Frank strolled around the piazza.

They had not gone far when they heard a shout and turned back. Jack Diamond was coming up the hotel steps, and Jack Ready was running to meet him. Rattleton looked troubled.

"Did you know he was coming?" as they hurried forward.

"No. This is a surprise."

"Then I'll bet a dollar he has had a letter from Dolph or Juliet, and has come on here purposely."

"This is great, Diamond!" Frank warmly declared.

"Come right up and tell us how it happened. I thought you had to be in the South?"

"I had to come to New York, and so I ran up here, hearing that you fellows were astonishing the natives. You won't object if I stand back and shout for you while you do up the next crowd of athletes that comes along?"

"And they're coming!" Ready chirped. "The Torontos will be here to-morrow."

Dolph Reynolds had not only become acquainted with the members of Merriwell's Athletic Team, but he had taken an especial fancy to Jack Ready, to whom he was now talking. There was something in Ready's airy boastfulness and the cheerful good humor of his round, red-apple cheeks that caught the fancy of the English lad. He liked Ready, and he did not hesitate to show it. Juliet also appeared to like Ready, a thing that was not at all pleasing to either Diamond or Rattleton.

"It would have been down in the old books as one of the Seven Wonders of the World if those ancient guys had known anything about it," laughed Ready, pleased with the young Englishman's acknowledgment. "What is it about the country that you don't especially like? We'll have it made over for you!"

Dolph looked at him a moment, then laughed.

"That's one of your deuced American jokes. It would be rawther a difficult thing to change it. Some

way I expected to see more forest land, don't y' 'now! Then everything seems so crude and new. The houses look as if they had only been put up and painted yesterday. You haven't any old mansions and historical castles. It must be deuced unpleasant not to have any history, y' 'now. Now, take Niagara."

"You can't take it; it's too big to lug away."

"Don't y' 'now, deah boy, you're a blooming queer fellah! How could anybody think of carrying away a waterfall? But if there were some piles of old ruins here, y' 'now, with ivy growing on them, and old armor in the halls, and all that, don't y' 'now? I never realized what it means to have a history. And your democratic American railway carriages! All the people crowding in together, don't y' 'now? I'm dying to see some ivy—not patches of it, but growing all over the walls, don't y' understand?"

"Then I'll take you down to New Haven. They have an ivy manufactory down there, and the old buildings at Yale are just covered with it. When they put up a new building they give it a coat of paint mixed with earth taken from an English castle to make it look old; and they telephone the ivy factory, and they bring the ivy up in trainloads and stick it all over the house. In two days the building looks like a castle on the Rhine. They haven't caught on up here yet, but they're learning. They're boring another tunnel under the city here to get power for an

ivy factory that will supply the entire country. Big demand, you know."

Dolph stared at Ready, and then laughed.

"And they've started a factory in New York to turn out pedigrees and lineages and all that! You go down there and tell them what you want, and pick out your coat-of-arms, with the lions rampant or couchant, or any old way to suit you, and hand over the fee, and they do the rest. The next week you appear on the boulevard in an English drag showing the coat-of-arms, and the papers tell of the discovery that you are descended from Lord Heirless of Ludington, and your wife is adopted by the Sorosis Club; and then you give a dinner and are strictly in it. You fellows are slow over beyond the big pond. You don't know how to hustle a little bit. Here, if you want anything, you step up to the bargain counter, pay your price, and take it."

Dolph looked at Ready again, with increased admiration.

"You're stringing me, don't y' 'now, as you blooming Americans say."

"As soon as the factory has supplied enough customers to make a demand for the exclusive English railway system, the American railways intend to put in English railway coaches, so that you can shut yourself up in your compartment with your grandmother and feel how much better you are than the herd. It

takes time, Reynolds; but even that is in our favor, for we've got all the time there is."

They were walking toward the well-known International Hotel, where on their arrival they found Juliet Reynolds engaged in conversation with Jack Diamond. Jack scowled when he saw Ready, for Juliet had been singing the praises of the apple-cheeked fellow, and Jack did not like it. Juliet motioned her brother and his new friend to her side, and soon they were all listening to Ready's queer comments, and all laughing heartily, with the exception of Diamond.

"What does the fellow mean?" was his thought. "He came over here purposely to get a chance to see Juliet, and now he is simply spreading himself to draw all the attention."

This sore and jealous feeling put Diamond at a decided disadvantage, for it made him silent and apparently insignificant in the presence of the airy chatterer, who talked on in a way that drew bursts of laughter from Juliet and increased Dolph's admiration for his "eccentric" American friend.

Juliet was more bewilderingly beautiful that evening than she had ever seemed to Diamond before. She had not changed, except for the better, since he saw her last in England. She looked like a young queen, with her liquid black eyes and raven hair, and the beautiful hands, white as wax and such as a sculptor might rave over. Diamond was desperately

smitten—as desperately as when he had first acknowledged to Merriwell in England that he wildly loved this handsome English girl.

“I have just found a blooming American joke, don’t y’ ’now?” Dolph suddenly declared.

“Refuse me,” chirped Ready, “but I must warn you that American jokes are all copyrighted. You won’t dare to use it, unless it’s one about the American tramp, or Jew, or colored chicken-thief, or your mother-in-law. The copyright has run out on those, and everybody uses them. Everything else barred.”

“It’s a card joke, don’t y’ ’now? You and Mr. Diamond—a pair of jacks!”

Juliet laughed at this and Dolph roared.

“Dolph, you are prepared to become a citizen of this land of the free and home of the joke. I’ll take you down to get out your naturalization papers tomorrow.”

“I’ll have to tell that to the dragon,” said Dolph, still laughing. “Aunt Hetty, y’ ’now. She is with us.”

Diamond had forced a smile, but he did not laugh. Under other circumstances he might have appreciated the thing, but not now. He was in no mood to appreciate anything that linked him with Jack Ready, whom he had been mentally declaring an insane jackass.

By and by, when he could endure his torture no

longer, he invented an excuse to get away, and walked furiously out into the night toward Merriwell's hotel, where the first person he ran against was Harry Rattleton.

"Is Dolph over at the International?" Rattleton asked.

"You mean Juliet?" flared Diamond.

Harry flushed.

"I asked for Dolph. But suppose I do mean Juliet; is it any of your business? You might answer my question."

Diamond controlled his temper with a powerful effort, and succeeded in preventing himself from striking Rattleton in the face; but he could not keep from flinging at him as he passed on:

"You're another jackass!"

"Glad you've discovered that you're the first one!" Rattleton threw back. "You won't answer my civil question, so I'm going over to the International to find out."

Diamond turned half around, but checked himself, and walked on again. A few minutes later he met Merriwell.

"Going home in the morning, Merry," he declared, unable to conceal his anger and bitterness. "I wanted to say good-by, for I'll get out on the early train."

"See here," said Merriwell, "I want to have a talk with you."

CHAPTER XV.

THE CONFIDENT TORONTOS.

Later in the evening Dolph Reynolds hurried out of the billiard-room of the International Hotel, which Frank was passing, and hailed him.

"There are some of your friends in here, Merriwell," he drawled, in his English way. "I want you to see them, don't y' 'now! It strikes me that it's deuced important."

Merriwell liked Reynolds, for Dolph was in many respects a splendid fellow, though he had his faults, and was in danger of being underrated and misunderstood by Americans because of his mannerisms and English ways.

"What's up?" Frank asked.

"I rawther think there will be some big bets up."

He took Frank's arm, and they entered the billiard-room, to find there Dunstan Kirk, together with Curringer and Galt, the Princeton pitcher and catcher, who had been the battery of the Wabeeks in the big game in the Adirondacks. The billiard-room was well filled, and at several of the tables men were playing.

"Glad to see you, Merriwell!" said Kirk. "In fact, we fellows came up to Niagara on purpose to see you, for we want you to go up against the Torontos. We'll whoop things up for you if you will."

"They're in town," said Curringer, also taking Merriwell's hand, as did also Galt. "They arrived ahead of time, and will have a whole day here with nothing to do before they go on South. Let me introduce you to Kendall Beauchamp, of Toronto. He's a bit skeptical about the ability of your team, and thinks the Toronto boys would simply make monkeys of you."

"Sure of it!" said Beauchamp, acknowledging the introduction.

"Oh, we're ready to play, but we're not anxious to," Frank declared.

"I've been hearing about you," Beauchamp continued, in an offensive way. "I suppose your wrist is out of fix, as usual."

"What do you mean by that?" Frank asked, coloring slightly. "My wrist was knocked out in the Adirondacks, but I have taken good care of it since, and it is now all right."

"Oh, I didn't know!"

"He seems to think that is a fake," snapped Rattleton.

"Well, it's mighty convenient!" sneered Beauchamp. "If you lose a game, that accounts for it; and if you win, why there is added glory in the fact that you did it under tremendous difficulties."

Frank's eyes glittered, but he held his temper.

"I don't like such talk, Beauchamp. I have just told you that my wrist is all right. I want you to

understand that I have never claimed that my wrist was out of condition when it was not."

"Oh," said Beauchamp, "I didn't mean any offense."

"Then it would be becoming in you not to use offensive words."

"He doesn't belong to the Torontos," Kirk explained, as Beauchamp moved away, "but I've met members of the team, and have been telling them about you, and they simply sneer, for they think they can just eat you fellows. I'd like to see a game arranged between your team and the Torontos to-morrow. It would be great!"

"It made me hot to hear that fellow talk," said Danny.

There were other members of the Merriwells who had been made hot by the talk of the man from Toronto. Several of the Torontos came into the billiard-room shortly. They had heard of Merriwell's men, for the town was filled with the story of the defeat of the Niagara Rapids. They had also heard of the baseball games in the Adirondacks. Kirk introduced himself to the Toronto captain, and then introduced the captain to Frank.

"Parr, captain of the Torontos; Merriwell, captain of the Athletic Team of Yale students."

"And American Indians," said Parr, smiling.

Merriwell found that Parr was not at all a bad fel-

low, nor overdisposed to boasting, although he was supremely confident in the abilities of his team.

"Why, we wouldn't want to meet your men, Merriwell," he said laughingly, yet in earnest. "Your team has no recognized standing, you know, if you will pardon me for saying it. More a band of jolly good fellows, from what I can learn of it. You're traveling and sightseeing, not playing ball."

"They played some ball in the Adirondacks!" said Kirk. "I happen to be in a position to know. And they can beat the Torontos all right."

Parr smiled skeptically.

"You must excuse me if I am not able to accept that statement. You wouldn't expect such a crowd as Merriwell's to defeat one of the teams of the Eastern League?"

This was the general tenor of the talk that evening, for every member of the Torontos simply scoffed at the idea of lowering their dignity by entering into a game with the Merriwells. They were sure they could defeat the "aggregation of freaks" which Frank had gathered around him, but they were equally sure that it would be no particular honor to do anything of the kind. Frank's team, as they said, had no recognized standing.

"Why, we might as well play any high-school nine that comes along!" laughed Parr. "The thing is simply ridiculous. You fellows wouldn't get a hit, and

we would simply bat Merriwell out of the box. You fellows of the Wabeek Nine must have been doped or lazy to let them down you in the Adirondacks."

"And that trick of the lame wrist is a silly dodge," Beauchamp was heard to exclaim.

"And that story about the double-shoot is all rot, you know," one of the Toronto members declared. "Whoever saw anything of the kind?"

"I have seen it many times," declared Kirk.

"Then you must have been cross-eyed. It's nonsense, you know!"

"Will you meet the Merriwells?"

"Why should we? It's ridiculous!"

Kirk's face was flushed as, in company with Dolph Reynolds, he hunted up Merriwell.

"Those fellows are insufferable, Merriwell! I want you to play them. I can get a game out of them, I think, if you're willing."

"I don't care to play them."

"You're not afraid of them?"

"Of cawse he isn't afraid of them!" said Dolph. "I was hoping, Merriwell, that you would go into the thing, don't y' 'now!"

"I'll think about it," said Frank.

Then he went out of the billiard-room. Comfortably seated above, enjoying the bright night, he found Harry Rattleton and Juliet Reynolds, with the drag-

on in a chair near-by asleep. Rattleton jumped to meet him.

"Making hay while the stars shine!" he whispered.

Diamond had concluded not to go home in the morning after his talk with Frank, but he was not to be seen.

"I've been talking to Miss Reynolds about you, Merry," Rattleton chattered, as he again dropped into a chair, while Frank took another. "She wants to see you play the Torontos. I've told her we fellows can beat them out of their boots."

"What an odd expression, Mr. Rattleton!"

"Well, we can do it, can't we, Merry?"

"I should very much enjoy seeing such a game," she said.

"I've been thinking about it," Frank answered. "I'll have a talk with the members of the team, and be ready to give an answer in the morning."

"And you're sure your wrist is all right?" Harry anxiously asked.

"It was never in better condition. I've done nothing but doctor it and favor it since that last game with the Wabeeks, and it has come round all right."

CHAPTER XVI.

PLUNGING.

The next morning Frank Merriwell sent a challenge to the boastful Toronto nine, which, after some hesitation and debate on their part, was accepted, the game to be played that afternoon. The hesitation was not due to any fear that the Merriwells might defeat them, but only to a reluctance to go up against a "mob" of college men whom it would be small honor to defeat.

Before the forenoon was half passed word came to Merriwell that Dolph Reynolds was betting heavily on the Athletic Team. Merriwell looked him up, not pleased with this.

"See here, Dolph," he said; "of course I have no right to say that you shall not bet on the game this afternoon, though I much prefer that you wouldn't. But I hope you won't get any of our fellows to betting."

Dolph gave him a wise look.

"It would be rawther a stretch of authority for me to forbid any of your men from betting, don't y' 'now, if they are inclined that way. And it will be a beastly game if we cawn't bet anything. That's what gives life to a thing of that kind, y' 'now!"

Merriwell had discovered in England that Dolph was a plunger.

"The thing I am most afraid of is that, if the members of our team get to betting, it will break up the vacation trip," Frank urged.

While Merriwell was thus talking with Dolph Reynolds, Jack Ready and others were in the billiard-room of the International getting together a good round purse to wager on the Athletic Team that afternoon. The scoffing air with which the Torontos regarded the coming ball-game had aroused the Merriwells.

"We'll not only let them know that we're the real thing with signature blown in the bottle, but we'll rake in their little wad at the same time!" Ready was chirping when Dolph came in from his talk with Frank.

Though he could not agree with Merriwell, Dolph Reynolds had been inclined to take Merriwell's advice simply to please him; but the sight of that pile of money swept him off his feet. All the plunging blood in him was re-aroused.

"We must do some betting," was his thought. "It would be a blooming shame to let such a chawnce pass, and I cawn't urge the fellows to do anything of the kind."

"Merriwell will be down on this," said Rattleton.

"We needn't open our ruby lips to him about it,"

said Ready. "We can call this thing a little trust, and we'll hold the secret so closely that even a corkscrew couldn't twist it out of us."

"I'm down on trusts," remarked Carker, "but I'm with you in this one. I should rather call it a co-operative enterprise."

"Co-op it is, then. A dollar by any other name will look as fair."

"Tell you what," suggested Rattleton, "we'll hand this over to Dolph and let him put it up, and no one need to know that it isn't his money. See?"

"I'll be glad to take it, y' understand," Dolph declared. "I wish I had five thousand pounds to lay on this thing, don't y' 'now! I knew Merriwell in England. He's sure to win this game."

"With the help of the rest of us!" squealed Bink.

So the money, more than one-half of which was Ready's, went into the hands of Dolph Reynolds, to be wagered on the success of the Merriwells that afternoon.

"Fellows, we're up against poverty if anything should slip," droned Browning. "But I really don't think there is any danger. If there was, I'd keep out of it, for you know what a coward I am."

"And we won't say anything to Merry about it," said Carker.

"Hush! Not a word!"

Bink Stubbs lay back on a lounge in his room, and winked one eye at the ceiling.

"I see pictures," he said.

"Pictures of what?" snapped Rattleton, who was in no good humor, for he was jealous of both Diamond and Ready.

Bink turned over and stared at Harry.

"I'd like to bet another wad of long green that Ready cuts you out. You and Diamond aren't in it. It doesn't take the seventh son of an Indian mahatma to see that. That's one of the pictures I see. You and Diamond laid out on the ice-cold cooling board, while Jack Ready is wading into the affections of the beautiful Miss Reynolds. Why, a blind man can see that!"

"I'll neck his break for him—I mean I'll break his neck for him!" Rattleton exclaimed, with a sickly grin. "But it's none of your business, just the same, and I'll thank you to keep your head closed!"

Bink snapped his jaws together with his fingers.

"Close as a clam! But I meant it only as a warning, Rattles."

"You've had a thundering lot of experience. What do you know about such things?"

"Well, when my girls get ready to throw me over, they always act in just that way. Hello! Not going?"

"Yes, I'm going! You make me sick!"

"Say, come back and I'll give the kaleidoscope a flirt and make the pictures look better. No offense, I hope?"

But Rattleton was gone.

As he strode down the hall he came upon Diamond, who was looking for Merriwell. Diamond passed him with a cool nod, and turned into Merriwell's room at the farther end of the corridor. Jack stopped on the threshold, for Ready was in the room with Frank.

"Two of a kind!" chirped Ready, when he saw the Virginian, his reference being to Dolph's little joke about a "pair of Jacks."

"I didn't speak to you, I believe!" was Diamond's lofty declaration. Then he turned to walk away.

"Better come in, Diamond," Merriwell urged.

"I don't care to talk to you, Merry, when that cad is in there!"

Ready's red-apple cheeks grew redder, but he seemed otherwise quite undisturbed.

"Our fiery Southern friend must have his little joke! I've heard that 'cad' is his synonym for 'very dear friend.' Don't let it trouble you, Merry. I assure you it doesn't me."

Diamond might have gone on but for that. He sprang back into the doorway.

"You are a cad!" he hissed.

"Well, you know Dolph said we were a pair!"

"You're a cad and you're a coward!"

Ready's cheeks flamed, and he seemed about to rise to meet Diamond as the latter took a step into the room.

"That will do, Diamond!" declared Merriwell, rising and putting himself between the two Jacks. "There will be no quarreling here."

"Somewhere else, then!" Diamond panted. "Let him meet me somewhere else!"

Jack Ready's cheeks paled, and he dropped back into his chair with a forced smile.

"If the creature finds that amusing, let him go on!" he quivered. "I don't make any great pretensions to blood and all that. I'm not a race-horse!"

"You're nothing!" cried Diamond.

"Have you both gone crazy?" Merriwell demanded. "You are Yale men, comrades and friends. What has got into you?"

"Let it pass," chirped Ready, trying to regain his usual composure. "I'll just consider the source, as the man said when the jackass kicked him."

Diamond leaped at Ready, but Merriwell caught him and flung him back against the wall.

"Let me at him!" he hissed. "I will teach him to insult a gentleman!"

"That's all right. Let him come on. My name is Ready, and I'm not afraid of him. Confound your hot Southern blood, Diamond! You needn't think you can walk over me just because you chanced to be

born south of the line of Mason and Dixon. Let him come on, Merriwell!"

He did not rise out of his chair as he said this, though his round cheeks were flaming again.

"You're in the wrong here, Diamond!" Frank sternly declared. "You were the first to give offense. And I must tell you that there will be no quarreling or fighting here."

"All right!" snapped the Southerner, and he darted out of the room and down the corridor.

Merriwell appeared to be on the point of following him, but stopped and turned back.

"It's all on account of that girl," said Ready, regaining his composure. "Why, the idiot! Does he suppose that no one else has any right to speak to her? I'll stay by her side every minute that she'll let me from now on."

"Then you'll have a fight on your hands from both Diamond and Rattleton."

"Well, I'll have the fun, anyway!"

"And you don't care anything for Miss Reynolds? Love is a field that all may contest in, and you have as much right to try to win her as any one. I thought you were serious in your attitude toward her."

"Well, I like her," said Ready. "As the bee loves the flower and the moth loves the candle, and all those other similes; but I'm not dying to win her for my very own, so that we may tread the path of life to-

gether toward the golden, dying sunset. That isn't it. She's interesting and I like her, and I enjoy a bit of fun."

"And you get it by making Diamond and Rattleton jealous?"

"I think you are a New Englander, Merriwell, you're so good a guesser."

"Well, I want to warn you that you're playing with fire."

"I've known little boys to have a lot of fun playing with fire—before they got burnt. If I burn my fingers, I'll soak 'em in my mouth and not howl about it."

"It would be just like Diamond to challenge you to fight him—to a regular duel."

"Oh, would it? Then I'll have to get ready, even if my name is Ready! You don't know of any old armory around here where I could get hold of some weapons? I'll ask Dolph to cable for a suit of mail."

Merriwell did not like this bantering tone when there seemed need of seriousness, and he frankly said so.

"He'll not challenge me!" Ready declared, when Frank had told him that such talk was ill-timed. "I'm not a bit afraid of it."

CHAPTER XVII.

PLAY BALL!

Though the game between Merriwell's Athletic Team and the nine from Toronto was to be played on short notice, a great crowd turned out. The Canadians were supremely confident, and in their warming-up practise they handled themselves so cleverly that they were greeted with frequent applause. There could be no doubt that they were skilful ball-players.

"This will be the easiest thing we've struck this season," declared Nuggledy, the Toronto pitcher, as he sent the ball over the man on first.

"Easy enough, but not much honor in it," said Parr, the captain, who was on first. "That's what made me hesitate about accepting the challenge."

"But we didn't want them to crow over us and give out the word that we were afraid of them," said Nuggledy.

"We'll have no end of fun with them!" exclaimed Raub, who was to play third. "Why, those fellows couldn't play ball if they tried. That's one thing that makes Merriwell's wrist get out of fix so often. When he sees he's beaten, he says his wrist is out of condition, and he can't pitch the double-shoot."

"The double-shoot!" was Nuggledy's sarcastic com-

ment. "That's the worst rot yet! Nobody ever saw such a thing!"

The crowd continued to increase, and to the surprise of the Torontos it was soon seen that Merriwell's Athletic Team had many adherents. Nearly all the boys were howling for Merriwell, and many of the men were doing the same.

Juliet Reynolds was in the grand stand with the dragon. Jack Diamond wanted to be at her side, but he was not there, though if he had not been so foolishly jealous of her he would have seen that she desired his company quite as much as he did hers. Each was successfully hiding from the other this fact, which was patent to many others.

Rattleton felt a glow of happiness as he looked toward the vision in the grand stand. She seemed smiling down on him. Jack Ready saw that look darken as Rattleton chanced to glance in his direction.

"I wonder if Hammerswell is going to make a die of it?" Ready was asking himself at that very time. "The fellow must have had the very life scared out of him! Either that or he is afraid to again show his face."

"Play ball!" said the umpire, after the practise and the preliminaries; and the game began with the Athletic Team at the bat.

The Torontos were as gay and frolicsome as a lot of colts. They thought they had the game won be-

fore Nuggledy sent in the first ball from the box. Nuggledy thought so, too. A complacent and self-satisfied grin was on his face. He was a medium-sized, wiry fellow, and there was no doubt that he was a good pitcher. He only made the common mistake of underrating his adversaries—a thing which has not only lost ball-games but great battles.

Jack Ready, who was first on the batting list, came up chirping in his usual airy manner, and Nuggledy sent one in straight over the plate. Ready struck slashingly at it, missed it, and was thrown down by the force of the missed blow, stumbling and falling awkwardly; whereupon the Canadians simply howled. They fancied that the fun had already begun, and they were sure this would be the funniest game they had ever been in.

Swiftwing, who had been wandering around, now took a seat in the players' benches, and watched the game with an impassive face that told nothing of his real feelings. Jack Ready was smilingly puffing out his red cheeks.

"That's just my way of getting ready for clever work," he chirped. "I was an acrobat before I became a ball-player."

He watched the pitcher closely, and let the next ball pass. He saw that Nuggledy was not using a curve.

"One strike!" rang out the voice of the umpire.

The next ball was too close, and again Ready let it pass.

"One ball!" said the umpire.

The next was plainly beyond the base.

"Strike two!"

Ready was closely studying Nuggledy's delivery.

"See if you can get this one!" Nuggledy called out, with a grin.

It was right over the plate, and Ready met it handsomely, and singled into right field. The Toronto pitcher laughed.

"I thought I'd make you a present of that one!"

"Presents of value always accepted!" Ready cheerfully chirped from first. "With your aid, noble duke, we may be able to win this game!"

The crowd laughed in a good-humored way, for they liked Ready's easy manner. Some of them laughed, too, when Gamp awkwardly took up the bat and stepped into position; but their laughter quickly turned to admiration, for Gamp drove the first pitched ball hot to Climber, the Toronto short-stop.

Climber, thinking he had plenty of time to spare, made a "grand-stand play," picking up the ball with a flourish and juggling it before turning to throw. Ready was sprinting for second, and Climber threw lightly to second to cut him off, still feeling perfectly safe; but to his intense surprise, Ready reached second ahead of the ball.

Gamp was tearing down to first at deceiving speed. Spruce, the second-baseman, saw this, and threw to first as soon as the ball was in his hands, but Gamp's long legs had carried him over the bag ahead of the ball.

"If all you fellows will help just a little, we will win this game yet!" Ready chirped, while Gamp "haw-hawed" from first, and the crowd laughed and cheered.

Browning was next at the bat, and he loafed up, apparently so lazy he could hardly breathe. Nuggledy kept that grin on his face, but he was nettled, for he did not like the way those two men had taken bases.

"I'll give that big lubber a swift one," he thought, "and he is so slow that he'll be sure to strike at it after it is past him."

Then he sent in the ball with great speed. Bruce did not strike at it.

"One ball!" called the umpire.

The next ball was as hot as the first, but it was straight over the plate, and Browning met it easily, though without swinging hard. The ball dropped just behind Climber, the short-stop, and while Climber was chasing it Ready sprinted to third, while Gamp took second, and Bruce went down to first.

"If you will just help us a little!" Ready again chirped, whereupon Nuggledy felt tempted to hurl the ball at his head. The spectators were laughing and

cheering again, and this did not tend to make the Toronto pitcher cheerful. Still, he was sure that these things were merest accidents, and that Merriwell's "lobsters" could not play ball.

The bases were now full, and Hodge came to the bat. Merriwell signaled Hodge to sacrifice, and when the second pitched ball came in Bart tried to bunt it toward first, but popped up a little fly instead, which, after a sharp run, was gathered in by Raub, the third-baseman, and Bart was out.

Nuggledy laughed gleefully, and shouted:

"You fellows on the bases have gone just as far as you will!"

Frank Merriwell came next on the batting-list, and as he walked up to the plate he received a tremendous ovation from the crowd, most of whom recognized him and knew of his ability as a ball-player. People got up in the bleachers and grand stand, and, swinging their hats and fluttering their handkerchiefs and parasols, simply howled, to the amazement of Nuggledy and the Toronto men.

With a laugh Nuggledy chased away the frown that was gathering on his face, and observed, in a voice loud enough to be heard:

"That's all right! I'll show you what a soft mark this college duffer is!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

FINE WORK.

With the utmost confidence, Nuggledy now sent in a wide out drop. Merriwell thought it would suit him. He reached for it, hit it squarely on the trademark, and drove it away out beyond the farthest fielder.

Then, while the base-runners spurred and he ran for first, the crowd again burst out in wild cheering, while cries of "Merriwell! Merriwell!" broke through the tumult of yells and shouts, and the enthusiastic boys, who had grouped together, screamed and danced like imps.

Hotfuss, the center-fielder, was chasing wildly after the ball, while the runners were tearing round the bases, and man after man came in.

Hotfuss got the ball and threw it to Spruce, the second-baseman, as Merriwell passed third and tore along for the home plate. The people in the grand stand and in the bleachers were again standing up, wildly screeching and bellowing, while the air was a-flutter with hats and handkerchiefs.

"Come home, Merriwell!" Gamp began to bellow. "Cuc-cuc-come home, old mum-man!"

Spruce promptly lined the ball to Simbe, the catcher.

"Slide!" yelled Ready, when he saw that Simbe

would get the ball. Merriwell threw himself forward in a desperate slide.

Plunk! went the ball in Simbe's hands.

"Safe!" shouted the umpire, himself excited by this brilliant playing.

Then the crowd simply screamed. Danny turned a handspring and began to sing, and was joined by a score of others in the refrain:

"Oh, who's the man to bring them in?

Our Merriwell! Our Merriwell!

The bleachers answer with a din!

Oh, hear them yell! Oh, hear them yell!

Oh, he will break Toronto's pride!

Oh, he's the boy to tan their hide!

Oh, he's our pole-star and our guide!

Our Merriwell! Our Merriwell!"

Delancy Livingston made his way out of the screeching crowd and disgustedly walked off.

"Aw!" he grumbled. "That's enough to make a sensible man sick, don't y' 'now! How people can howl so over Merriwell is more than I know. If I tell Hammerswell about this it will kill him."

A half-smile was on the dark face of John Swift-wing as he heard the tremendous cheering. He was not to take part in this game, unless Frank's wrist failed, but the sense of a victory to be won thrilled him, nevertheless.

Nuggledy had stopped laughing, and the grin had disappeared from his face. He failed to find any mer-

riment in the fact that four scores had been made by Frank's "homer."

"Boys," said Merriwell, as Rattleton picked up a bat, "if we play ball to-day, this game is won already!"

"You bet we'll bay plall!" shouted Harry.

"We'll play the game of our lives!" Bart declared, while his dark face shone.

"We've struck the winning streak and we'll work it to the end!" Ready enthusiastically chimed in.

"Well, I really think myself that the cards are coming our way," Bruce droned.

"We can make it the game of our lives, fellows!" Merriwell asserted encouragingly; and they all felt in their heart of hearts that this could be done.

But Nuggledy had mentally resolved that this un-called-for and unexpected way of winning scores must stop then and there, and he proceeded to get down to business to try to stop it. He was a good pitcher, and, having been taught the severe lesson that it would not do to fool with "Merriwell's lobsters," he began to pitch ball so intelligently and with such skill that Rattleton quickly fanned out; and two were out.

Greg Carker came to the bat somewhat anxious, in spite of the encouragement given the team by Merriwell's words. He had seen Harry strike out, and he feared it might be his fate to do the same.

"Keep cool!" Frank warned, observing Carker's perturbed face.

In spite of this, Greg swung at two balls which he should have let pass, for they would have been called "balls."

Carker let the next pitched ball go by.

"If he had only kept cool he might have had three balls," Hodge was mentally growling.

Carker belted the next ball, but he sent it straight into the hands of Spruce, the second-baseman; and the side was out. Nuggledy was laughing again as the Torontos came in from the field.

"Four scores! Oh, that's nothing! Just watch Toronto! We will get a hundred! Just watch us bat Merriwell out of the box!"

He said this in a voice loud enough to be heard by everybody near. Some of his admirers and the friends of the Torontos were cheering. They felt that the scores made by the Athletic Team were no indication of the way the game would go. Luck on the part of the Athletic Team and overconfidence on the part of the Canadians were responsible for what had occurred.

"Didn't you ever hear of the double-shoot?" a young man called out from the crowd.

"Rot!" shouted Nuggledy. "The double-shoot is the biggest fake on earth!"

Harry Rattleton was now and then giving a glance at the grand stand, where Juliet Reynolds sat with the dragon. His heart gave a sudden unpleasant leap as he observed that Jack Diamond had made his way

to her side. Ready saw them and lifted his hat to Juliet, who appeared to recognize him.

"Our rival is making hay while the bat flies!" Ready chirped in Rattleton's ear.

Harry's face flushed, but he saw that Frank's eyes were on his, and he simply grinned. All were walking out to take their positions.

When Finch, the Toronto's right-fielder, came up, for he was first on the batting-list of the Canadians, Frank put the ball straight over. Finch struck at it and put up a pop fly, which Frank took in.

Shannon, the center-fielder, came next. He confidently struck at it and hit the first pitched ball, but it was a high foul, which Hodge neatly smothered.

Two men were out.

"Just watch me!" crowed Parr, who was the Canadian captain and first-baseman, feeling that because both of the balls sent in by Merriwell had been hit, the pitcher of the Athletic Team was easy, and that only dead luck had put his men out.

Parr also struck the first pitched ball, and sent a grounder to Merriwell. Frank picked it up with great apparent deliberation while Parr was racing for first, then sent the ball whizzing down to Browning on first, and Parr was out. Three men had been put out on three pitched balls, and the thing had been done so quickly that the crowd of spectators was struck dumb.

Then, as the crowd seemed all at once to realize

what had taken place, a wild shout went to the sky. The Torontos were amazedly walking into the field again, hardly able to realize what had happened.

"Are you and Bart going to play the whole game?" Bink howled, as the side came in.

"I should like to know how we're to play the game of our lives if Hodge and Merry don't give us a chance to do anything?" drawled Browning.

"Mum-might's well set daown out in the sus-center fuf-field and play mum-mum-mumbly-peg!" said Gamp.

"It's all right," chirped Ready. "This gives me a chance to look all I want to at the handsomest girl in the world up there in the grand stand! Still, it would be pleasant if some of the double-distilled glory of this wonderful game could come my way. The battery, gentlemen, are disposed to play the hawg!"

Rattleton was about to add his quota to this universal chorus, but Ready's reference to the handsomest girl in the world shut him up like an oyster. He began to feel that he hated Jack Ready with an undying hatred, and that it would do him good to be able to give the airy chatterer a good whipping. And Rattleton, in spite of his show of the white feather when frightened by the supposed dynamite bomb of Rodney Skaggs, was, when occasion required, a fellow of a good deal of real and solid courage, well able to take care of himself and to more than

hold his own against ordinary adversaries. He began to feel that a fight between him and Ready was coming, and he was longing for it, for this rivalry had completely upset his usual good nature.

Nuggledy was unmercifully guyed by the crowd as he went into the pitcher's box. The grin had gone from his face.

"There won't be any more of this business!" he snarled.

Stubbs came first to the bat, laughing and chirping; and Nuggledy, taking Bink's measure, struck him out with three "corner-cutters."

"Use Pears' soap!" howled Danny. "Go fall on yourself! If I couldn't do any better than that I'd crawl off and die!"

"You'll be my meat next!" sung out Nuggledy, as Danny took up the bat.

"I see pictures of it!" Danny squealed back, flourishing the bat. "Send along your corner-cutters. I'm ready for you!"

"Oh, you couldn't hit a balloon!" Bink hotly retorted. "You give me that heavy feeling of weariness. If you don't quit working your tongue so much you'll have mouth disease."

Nuggledy was beginning to grin again, and the grin became more pronounced as he forthwith proceeded to put Danny out in the same way that he put out

Bink. The crowd cheered the performance; but the Merriwell contingent of enthusiasts represented by the crowd of small boys was silent. The boys did not like Nuggledy, and they were not pleased to see Merriwell's men go down in that way.

Then Jack Ready came up, smiling and confident, as usual. He had got a hit in the first inning, and he felt sure that he could now get another. But Nuggledy fooled him with a ball close to his knuckles, and Ready fanned. The next was an out drop, but Jack let it pass, and "one ball" was called. The next was high, and Ready fanned again.

"Strike two!" called the umpire.

Then Nuggledy tried a wide "coaxer," but Jack let it pass with a grin.

"Two balls!" the umpire sang out, while Nuggledy was smiling.

The next ball from the hand of the Toronto pitcher was another high one. Ready started to strike at it, but stopped in time.

"Ball three!"

"Now you've got him in a hole, old man!" was cried from the crowd. "He can't put the next one over!"

Nuggledy grinned viciously, and sent in a speedy in shoot, which barely took the outside corner of the plate. Confident that it would be a "ball," Ready did

not swing at it, and was astonished to hear the umpire say:

"Three strikes; batter out!"

Three men were out—all struck out by Nuggledy.

The friends of the Torontos found their time to howl now, and they used it for all it was worth. They stood up in the benches and cheered and cheered; and Nuggledy came in from the box with a triumphant grin.

"Talk about your pitching!" sneered one of the Canadians. "I should like to see Merriwell do that trick. He isn't in it with Nuggledy."

Frank heard this as he walked toward the box, but he made no sign.

Climber, the heaviest batter on the Toronto team, now came first to bat. Merriwell gave him a swift one straight over, but Climber smilingly let it pass. The next was an out curve, and the Canadian batter gave it an awful crack, knocking it out into deep center, and sprinted for first.

Apparently it was impossible for Gamp to get the ball, though he had turned and was going over the ground as fast as his long legs could carry him, looking over his shoulder at the coming ball.

"It's a home run, Climber!" Simbe shouted, as Climber tore along for first. "The fellow can never get it."

Everybody seemed to think so. The Canadian

rooters were again cheering. But Gamp was fairly flying down the field—apparently going as fast as the ball. It appeared that it would go above his head, out of reach, but as it neared him he was seen to jump straight up into the air.

Climber had passed first and was starting toward second.

“He’s got it!” some one screeched.

Gamp had the ball. It was a phenomenal jump and a wonderful catch, but there could be no doubt that the long-legged New Englander had caught and held the ball; and Climber was out. Then the friends of the Merriwells sent back with interest the cheers that had been uttered by the sympathizers of the Canadians.

Though the spectators were astounded and wildly excited, Merriwell was cool and smiling. And so was every member of the Athletic Team. Gamp had made wonderful catches before, and not even Danny and Bink appeared to regard the performance as anything very remarkable. Not a word was said by any of them in praise of Gamp, though the bleachers and the grand stand rang with cheers. Climber was “sore,” for it seemed to him that he had simply been robbed of a two-bagger by a “farmer.”

The next man at the bat was Simbe, the catcher of the Torontos, who was known to his friends as a great “waiter.” Frank began on Simbe by trying

"coaxers," but the batter had "a good eye," and he let three pass which were called "balls."

"That pitcher is fruit!" sneered Nuggledy. "Why doesn't he use his wonderful double-shoot? We're waiting to see it!"

Merriwell put the next ball over the plate and Simbe drove it wide on a line to the right of Bink Stubbs, the short-stop, who, shooting at it with a diving lunge, stuck out one hand and caught it. It was a phenomenal catch, and was greeted with a great uproar from the spectators. Simbe was growling mad, for another clean hit had been unexpectedly spoiled; but not a member of the Athletic Team appeared to think Bink's performance remarkable. Even Danny seemed to silently accept it as a matter of course.

The spectators were talking excitedly and cheering, when Hotfuss, the left-fielder, came up, grimly determined, yet anxious. He smashed at the first ball and hit it to the ground and past Frank. It was a scorcher and almost over second. Rattleton, who had been playing his position well off second toward first, jumped at the ball, moving toward it with quick strides, and scooped it up on the run, while Hotfuss was sprinting for first. Rattleton was running from first so fast when he scooped up the ball that he knew he had no time to turn and catch Hotfuss by a throw, so he tossed it with that scooping motion straight into the hands of Bink Stubbs, who instantly lined it over

to Browning on first. It was hot and speedy work, but the ball reached first ahead of the runner, and Hotfuss was out. It was really one of the cleverest plays ever seen on any diamond, and the vast crowd of spectators roared its approval.

"Out, first!" rang out the voice of the umpire, while that roar went up.

The crowd was still roaring and the boys were screeching and cheering, as Merriwell's men coolly walked in from the field without a show of exultation. Not a member of the Athletic Team uttered a word of praise for the wonderful plays that had been made, and the Torontos went into the field in a sort of trance, beginning to realize that they were "up against the real thing!"

CHAPTER XIX.

THE GAME OF THEIR LIVES.

"Fellows, let me tell you that you're playing the game of your lives," said Frank, quietly speaking to his men as he sat on the bench. "I am more than pleased with you."

It was praise indeed.

Juliet was smiling from the grand stand; Swift-wing's black eyes shone with the feelings he could not express; and Dolph Reynolds was feeling that the money he had wagered for himself and others was safe. Gamp came up looking more awkward, if possible, than ever. He let the first ball pass. The second he hit to Raub, the third-baseman, who threw him out.

Bruce loafed up, lazily dragging his bat. He seemed in no hurry for anything, and waited until one ball and two strikes had been called, then lifted a big fly into the left field and started for first. But Hotfuss, the left-fielder, gathered it in, and two men were out.

The friends of the Toronto men took courage and began again to cheer wildly; and even the friends of the Merriwells were not disposed to hide their appreciation of this sort of work. The spectators began to feel that they were certainly getting their money's worth, however the game might go, for such work as

had lately been shown by both teams was not to be seen every day.

Hodge was in a stew as he took the bat and faced the pitcher. A while ago things had been going to suit him, but they were not going to suit him at all now. With his dark face clouded, he smashed savagely at the first ball and lined it straight down to Parr on first. Parr cuffed the ball down, picked it up, then jumped on the bag ahead of Bart; and three men were out. Everybody rose up and cheered. This was playing. Indeed they were getting their money's worth!

In the second half of the third inning, Spruce, the Canadian's second-baseman, came first to the bat.

"We've got things coming our way now," said Nuggledy. "Let's pound Merriwell out of the box."

Spruce tried his best to do some of the "pounding," but Frank quickly struck him out with three high balls, and Nuggledy groaned his disgust.

"There wasn't any use of that!" he snapped, as Raub took the bat. "Keep your eyes open, Raub! Don't let him fool you with those high ones!"

Frank did not try to "fool" Raub with high ones, but he "fooled" him with three sharp in shoots, and Raub as quickly fanned out. The boys had shrilly tuned up, and the crowd was again roaring.

"Wot's de matter with Merriwell?" yelled an enthusiastic urchin. "W'y don't yer bat 'im out of the box? Yer said yer would!"

"Shut up!" Nuggledy exploded.

Nuggledy came up with a grin, though he was white-faced.

"I'm going to make a hit, fellows!" he boasted. "I think I should like to see that wonderful double-shoot. Its owner hasn't had it on exhibition to-day. Perhaps, though, it has got out of its cage and strayed away. Better put a sign up, Merriwell: 'Lost, strayed, or stolen. The double-shoot. Exclusive property of Frank Merriwell.' Merriwell, if the double-shoot isn't lost and you've got it hid somewhere in your jeans, I really think you ought to trot it out."

Frank did not answer this, but sent in the ball. It looked to be an out curve, and Nuggledy let it pass, thinking it would not go over the plate; but it changed to an in and cut the corner of the plate.

"Strike one!" shouted the umpire.

The crowd behind the catcher roared:

"There's the double-shoot!"

"That was an optical delusion!" growled Nuggledy.

The next ball from the hand of Merriwell was an in. It appeared to shoot toward Nuggledy, and, thinking it might hit him, he jumped back. But it changed to an out and went over the heart of the plate.

"Strike two!" sung out the umpire, and Nuggledy could hardly believe his ears, while the crowd roared again.

"That was another one. There's your double-shoot!"

"That ball didn't go over the plate!" Nuggledy howled at the umpire. "I had to jump back to keep it from knocking me down!"

"Shut up!" commanded the umpire. "I can see, and I know my business!"

"You want to keep your eyes open and see the double-shoot!" was yelled at the angry batter by the crowd.

"I'll smash the next one, no matter what it is!" Nuggledy growled to himself.

But the ball took a queer twist as it crossed the plate, and, though Nuggledy smashed at it, he did not touch it. The side was retired, Nuggledy having been struck out by the double-shoot; and as Frank came in from the pitcher's box, cool and modest, the crowd was ready to go wild over him. He was first at the bat in this inning, and put a single into left on the first pitched ball.

"You'll not be able to imitate his example!" gritted Nuggledy, as Rattleton walked into position.

Rattleton fanned out, and Carker stood up. The first one was wide. Simbe jumped for it, stopped it, picked it up, and threw quickly to Spruce to cut off Merriwell, who was making a dash for second.

"Slide!" yelled Ready, who was coaching near first.

"Slide!" shouted a dozen voices.

Frank threw himself forward in a great slide, but the ball plunked into the hands of the second-baseman, and Frank was put out. Then the friends of the Torontos howled.

Carker sent the next ball to the short-stop and was thrown out at first, which retired the side. Not a man of the Torontos reached first in that inning, for Merriwell struck out Spruce, and Raub and Nuggledy were thrown out at first—the one by Rattleton and the other by Bink Stubbs.

In the innings that immediately followed, though the Merriwells gained bases and once filled all the bases, they were kept from scoring; while Merriwell's pitching and the wonderful work of the Athletic Team prevented a single Canadian from gaining second. This continued until the first half of the eighth inning.

Merriwell's heart was filled with joy and pride. His men were really playing as he had never seen them play before. He had told them to play the game of their lives and they were doing it. Not an error did they make.

Swiftwing sat on the players' benches with chest heaving and eyes shining. His Indian blood was stirred so strongly that he found it impossible to wholly hide his feelings. Yet he spoke not a word of praise in behalf of his friends. And throughout it all the members of the Athletic Team refrained from

boasting and exhibitions of exultation in a remarkable manner.

The crowd was wild with excitement as the eighth inning opened, for the fielding on the part of the Athletic Team had been superb and Merriwell was now to go to the bat.

Nuggledy felt bound to strike Frank out; but Frank was cautious and did not swing until after two balls and two strikes had been called. Then he met the next and drove it far into center.

"Another homer!" the crowd yelled.

The center-fielder had played far back and Merriwell saw him close after the ball. The way Frank ran won cries of admiration from friends and foes alike. He seemed to be winged. He crossed first and second and tore along toward third.

"Cuc-cuc-come home!" Gamp began to yell, but the center-fielder had the ball and was throwing it to second, and Danny on the coach-line stopped Frank at third.

Nuggledy was so unmercifully guyed from all quarters that when he received the ball from Spruce he threw it on the ground in a perfect fury of rage. He seemed crazy with anger; and, as the ball bounded up and rolled away from him, Frank darted for home.

The Canadians began to yell to Nuggledy, who seemed unable to see the ball; and so much time was

lost that when he did pick it up and throw it Frank was already home.

The greatest uproar followed, the crowd guying and shouting at Nuggledy and cheering for Merriwell. Nuggledy was still in a white passion when Rattleton came to the bat, and he hit Rattleton with the first pitched ball and so gave him first.

Then Carker got a little single, which took Rattleton to second. Nuggledy could hardly see, when Stubbs walked into position with bat on shoulder. He sent in the balls, but they were so wide of the plate that Bink did not even remove the bat from his shoulder, but took first on balls.

It was plainly evident to Captain Parr that the Canadian pitcher was "all to pieces." He walked in, took the ball, and, entering the pitcher's box, sent Nuggledy to first.

Parr faced the home plate and sent Danny a slow drop. Danny tried hard to hit it, but it was too slow, and he fanned out on three of these slow balls.

Ready came up somewhat confident, for that slow drop looked easy; but it fooled him in the same way, and he struck out.

"I lul-live on slow dud-dud-drops!" Gamp stuttered as he stepped up.

He swung at the second and tried to line out a heavy one, but hit to Climber at short. Climber threw wide to second and failed to cut off Stubbs, but Gamp

immediately lifted a little fly that was caught, and the side was retired.

Dolph Reynolds, who had been making his way to the players' benches, filled with supreme confidence and with a face wreathed in smiles, said to Ready, as the side was walking to the field:

"That pot you fellows made up is safe, don't y' 'now!"

Frank heard him, and he felt hurt and angry. The words revealed to him the fact that the members of the Athletic Team had wagers laid on the success of the side in this game.

"You fellows have been betting, Jack, when I asked you not to?" he demanded of Ready.

Ready looked annoyed.

"What of it, Merry? We felt sure we would win—and, yes, we put up some money! I'm willing to shoulder most of the blame, though, for half the amount came from the jeans of your unworthy servant."

"I don't like it!" Frank sharply declared. "And I did think, after what I said, that there would be no betting."

CHAPTER XX.

THE TRIUMPH.

There appeared to be a change in Merriwell's pitching after that. He seemed to let up somehow, and, instead of striking out the batters, they began to hit him. Parr was the first up and he sent a hot liner to Jack Ready, who caught it and held to it, though it nearly lifted him off his feet. Then Climber batted a scorcher down the line to third, but Jack jumped for it, stopped it with one hand, then picked it up and, with a splendid throw, put Climber out at first.

Ready's work was received with enthusiastic cheering, which caused him to give his right hand a peculiar little wiggle, though this was his only acknowledgment that he heard the enthusiastic shouts.

Simbe now sent up a high foul far back of third base. It seemed that Ready could not get it, though he dashed for it. He got it, however, getting nicely under it and connecting with apparent ease.

Then the spectators howled again. The side was out and Ready had retired every man. Frank laughed, as Ready approached him while they were walking in.

"You seem to have done enough in this inning to win your money!"

"Thanks!" chirped Ready. "I haven't had much

chance this game to show the wonderful baseball timber that is in me, but I couldn't resist the temptation to be a bit sensational just now. Of course, I'll not do it again—I'll never have the luck and the opportunity!"

Frank gave a glance across the field, and at that moment he saw near the corner of the grand stand the white face of Herbert Hammerswell. White as it appeared to be from weakness, it was seen by him to be filled with rage and hate because of the wonderful work of the Athletic Team.

"You've been getting some big doses of very bitter medicine recently, Herbert," Frank muttered; "but I haven't the least hope that it will have any reforming power. You're one of the fellows who never reform and never learn!"

With the beginning of the ninth inning Parr put Nuggledy again into the pitcher's box, for the fellow had cooled down and the captain thought he could once more be trusted. Parr had given him a sharp talking to, and Nuggledy had been cool enough to stand it, which was in itself a good sign.

"I'll show these fellows that I can pitch!" he was thinking, as he faced the plate. "I made a fool of myself awhile ago, but I'll not do it again. Here goes for business!"

Though his face was still white and the grin had long ago disappeared, Nuggledy had regained control

of his nerves, as he now showed by striking out Browning.

Bart followed, and shared Browning's fate. Then Frank came again to the bat.

"I'm going to do you the same way!" the Toronto pitcher was whispering. "If you get me this time you'll be a miracle!"

Merry let two balls go by which were wide of the plate, and two strikes were then called on him.

"I've got you!" Nuggledy was whispering. "I've got you!"

But Merriwell sent the next one into center field. It was gathered in, however, by Shannon, the center-fielder, and the side was out.

The last half of the ninth inning began with Frank in the box in his best form. Though he had made use of the double-shoot when it was needed to make sure of striking a man out, he had not used it unnecessarily, and his wrist had stood up remarkably well under the work. It was still in excellent condition in this last half of the ninth; and to make sure that the remaining work would be done thoroughly and well he struck out Hotfuss and Spruce with the double-shoot.

"Hit it!" Nuggledy begged of Raub, as the latter took up the bat. "Hit it and give me one more chance."

Merriwell heard the words, and, instead of trying

to strike Raub out, he deliberately gave him his base on balls, so that Nuggledy might come up.

Nuggledy had his nerves in complete control as he stepped into place with the bat, but his face was still pale and showed traces of his passionate outbreak. He wanted to redeem himself in some manner and to show Merriwell and the crowd that howled for him that Frank was, as he mentally put it, "not the only strawberry in the short-cake."

"Keep cool!" Parr urged.

"Oh, I'm cool, all right!" Nuggledy grumbled, as he lifted the bat to swing.

Merriwell sent what seemed to be a straight ball, but it curved just over the plate, and Nuggledy hit nothing harder than the atmosphere. The next was an in curve, changing strangely to an out. Grinding his teeth as he slashed at it, Nuggledy again punctured the ozone.

"You're gittin' well acquainted wid de double-shoot by dis time!" one of the boys shrilly squealed. "Next time you meet it you won't need ter be interduced to it. See?"

Nuggledy fancied that the next would be an out curve, and it was. He thought it would change to an in, and it did. He thought he could figure out just where to strike to meet it, and he struck; but the in curve was much sharper than he believed could be possible, and again the Toronto pitcher fanned.

"Three strikes, out!" he heard the umpire cry, and he knew that the game had ended, with a score of five for the Merriwells to nothing for the Torontos.

When he realized that, his heart seemed to drop into his boots. The Torontos, who had been so confident, beaten—white-washed—by this unknown team, whom he and his friends had thought a lot of "farmers" and "lobsters." It was unbelievable, yet it was true.

The spectators were wild. Numbers of them rushed at Frank. The excitement and enthusiasm were intense. Not only were the baseball enthusiasts anxious to take Frank by the hand—the wonderful hand that had pitched the double-shoot—but they would have lifted him and carried him about in a triumphal procession if he had been willing to permit it. The other members of the Athletic Team also came in for a full share of the praise and the congratulations.

When the tumult had somewhat subsided, the Toronto manager contrived to draw Frank aside for "just a word."

"How much salary would it take, Merriwell, to sign you for the Torontos? I want you for a pitcher. I'm in earnest about this. I never saw such pitching, and I want you. If you will name a figure that I can touch at all, I'll pay it!"

It was an honor and an invitation which Frank was of course unwilling to consider for a moment.

When the manager found that he could not sign Frank and was moving away, Nuggledy came up with extended hand. His face was still pale. He knew he had been honestly defeated, and he realized now that there were some curves of which he had no knowledge and in whose existence he had scoffingly disbelieved.

"Merriwell," he said, glancing round to make sure he would not be heard. "I knock under, and I'll give you a thousand dollars if you will teach me how to pitch the double-shoot!"

"You saw it," was Frank's answer. "Perhaps you can work it out yourself, but the secret isn't for sale!"

Dolph and Juliet Reynolds pushed forward with enthusiastic greetings.

"I have a new name for your team," she said, smiling, "Frank Merriwell's Wonders. Such wonderful playing I never saw."

"It was more than wonderful, don't y' 'now!" Dolph exclaimed. "More than wonderful!"

CHAPTER XXI.

MERRIWELL TO THE RESCUE.

Three young men met at the edge of the Niagara River that night a short distance below the new single-arch steel bridge which has taken the place of the old suspension bridge. They were Jack Ready, Jack Diamond, and Harry Rattleton. Each had come to the place alone.

"Are you ready?" asked Diamond.

"Always Ready! That's my name."

Diamond turned a glance of hate on Harry Rattleton.

"I thought there were to be no seconds?"

"Refuse me! He is not my second. He is also likewise a principal. I received two lovely challenges this afternoon inviting me to bare my peaceful breast to a foe—one was from you, the other was sent by our good friend, Rattleton. Quite a coincidence, wasn't it? I think I shall have to pour this into some reporter's ears and get it into the papers. A three-cornered duel on the banks of the raging Niagara under Luna's pale light."

Diamond and Ready had quarreled again after the ball-game, and then Rattleton had come at Ready in red-hot wrath, with the result that within a half-hour of each other Jack Ready had received two challenges

to a duel; all because he had carried on a flirtation with Juliet Reynolds.

"I didn't come out here to listen to the chatter of a fool!" said Diamond. "If you intend to fight, I am ready. If you do not intend to, I shall brand you as a coward and a cur!"

Rattleton was puzzled. He had come out there to fight, too, but the presence of Diamond disturbed him. He glanced round.

"I see no weapons!" he snapped.

"As the receiver of your challenges, honored sirs, I understand that I have the choice of weapons. Behold this raging tide! Like the sea, it seldom gives up its dead. We will write out a paper giving the history of this rash meeting, which we will all sign, and then gently deposit it under a stone here where it will be found after our *début* into some other planet. Then we three will leap into the river. If any one of us gets to the other shore he may stick a feather in his hat and announce that he is the victor. The Niagara is the weapon of my choice! I think I shall remember this in my next incarnation."

"Do you mean to fight or not?" Diamond hotly demanded. "This is insufferable."

"I have chosen my weapon. The proposition is eminently fair for all of us. We three will plunge in together. If you object to getting your clothing wet——"

"This is an insult!" sputtered Rattleton.

Ready threw up his hands as if in despair.

"What would you, honest gentlemen? Could we make our exit in a handsomer way?"

He looked over the moonlit river. The surface appeared placid enough. Farther up where it was much rougher the little steamer, *Maid of the Mist*, moved daily, pushing her nose into the very edge of the falls. But Ready knew that below the placid surface a terrible undertow lay in wait for any one rash enough or unfortunate enough to come within its grasp. At that moment Rattleton glanced toward the bridge. A man had walked out upon it, who, in the semi-darkness, looked strangely like Herbert Hammerswell.

"This is disgusting!" said Diamond to Ready. "You are not only a coward, but you lack the common instincts of a gentleman. You accept my challenge and ask me to meet you here and then you insult me in this way. I shall brand you as a coward."

He turned about and strode toward the bridge. The man on the bridge drew back with a quick movement as Diamond stepped in that direction. The next moment there was a cry, and Rattleton saw the man shooting downward into the river.

"Whee-giz!" Harry excitedly exclaimed. "Do you see that?"

He leaped by Diamond on the run and dashed toward the point where the man had struck the water.

The point was near shore, fortunately, and when the man went down the undertow did not hold him there. He came up as Rattleton gained the bank, and threw up his hands despairingly. Rattleton felt sure the man was Hammerswell, even though the distance had been too great and the light not good enough to permit him to see the man's face.

For a moment Rattleton stood in hesitation. The current drew the struggling form nearer. Behind him Rattleton heard racing feet. It strengthened him to feel that others were near to assist in the rescue. He knew that the man might be saved, even if he was the hated Hammerswell. Then he threw off his shoes as quickly as he could and sprang into the river.

"I believe it is Hammerswell!" Ready shouted, dashing past Diamond to the bank.

He saw the man go under. Saw Rattleton reach down for him. Beheld then a fearful struggle in which Rattleton tried to get hold of the clinching, drowning fellow, and saw Rattleton go under, drawn down by Hammerswell—for the man was indeed Hammerswell.

Rattleton came to the surface farther down, still clinging to Herbert. He was nearer ashore. Yet he appeared not to be able to make much progress and he seemed to be constantly drawn downward, as if sucked at by the undertow.

He was already past the point on which Ready

stood, but Ready leaped in to go to his aid, while Diamond, forgetting the quarrel of a minute before, appeared also to be getting ready to lend aid. Then a form appeared on the shore a little farther down—the form of Frank Merriwell.

Merriwell had come to stop the duels, but he saw that other work was now cut out for him. He did not understand the situation, but he saw the forms in the water, and he was sure that some of them were his friends.

“Try to swim this way!” he shouted, funneling his hands.

When Ready reached Rattleton he tried to relieve him of Hammerswell’s heavy weight, for Herbert was now insensible.

“That’s Merriwell!” Rattleton panted. “Can we swim to that point?”

Diamond hurried down the bank when he heard Frank’s voice, desisting from his intention of plunging in to the aid of those struggling in the water.

“Swim to this point!” Merriwell called again.

The point projected slightly, and he stood out on the end of it. Seeing that he was understood, he dropped down on the rock and began to take off his shoes and clothing.

But for the aid of Ready, Rattleton and Hammerswell would both have been carried away. But Ready was so powerful a swimmer that he began to pull them

in toward the shore. Yet all were hampered by their clothing, and that awful undertow continually plucked at them, as if determined to drag them down into the seething depths far below.

"No need of your risking your life in there, Diamond!" Merriwell commanded. "Stay there."

Merriwell saw that Ready and the others in the water would be carried past the point. That would be almost fatal, for if the shore was not soon gained, their strength would be gone, and the river became wilder and rougher below.

As he spoke the words to Diamond, Frank went to the rescue, plunging lightly into the river, and then keeping himself on the surface by high swimming, thus preventing the effect of the undertow.

And thus he waited until they came within reach, and then, adding his powerful swimming strength to that of Jack Ready, the entire party gained the shore, where Hammerswell was found almost lifeless and Rattleton so exhausted that he could not stand.

"I take back what I said about you!" said Diamond, giving Ready his hand some time later. "Your ideas are not at all like mine, but you're not a coward. I haven't any call to like you, but you are a brave man!"

"And Rattleton went first!" said Ready.

CHAPTER XXII.

MADISON JONES.

It is some days later. The scene is very much as before—save that the figures have changed. Instead of live, healthy, young ball-players, we see before us a man, slinking in the bushes, and every now and then peering cautiously over the country.

Madison Jones, for that was his name, cautiously lifted his head from the clump of bushes in which he had hidden himself and glanced warily down the woodland path. His red eyes were ringed with dirty circles, his face was grimy with coal-dust which a recent washing had failed to remove, and in his muscular right hand he clutched a heavy slung-shot.

“There ain’t no law that says a man has a right to as much money as that,” he growled. “A roll of big bills as thick as my arm—and he gimme this!”

As he sank down into the bushes he fished a dime out of a pocket and angrily flung it away.

“Gimme that, when I told him that I had been discharged and was starvin’! Ten cents, and him with such a roll! But I’ll have it if I have to drag him out of the club-house. I follered him up here to git it, and I’ll git it!”

He ground his teeth together with fierce determination; then bored a hole through the leaves, and lying

flat on his stomach, surveyed the path and the woods within his field of vision.

"If the other feller comes along I'll tackle him, fer I reckon he's got as much money as his chum, and if they come together I'll climb 'em both. I can lay out two such fellers and not half try, fer one is drunk all the time, and I allow that t'other one hasn't enough courage to go up against a free-lunch counter."

If ever the brand of Ishmael was stamped on any one it was stamped on the miscreant who thus lay in wait, muttering and fingering the deadly slung-shot. From his round, bullet head to his heavy, clay-stained boots, every line revealed the criminal. Yet he had worked his way from Buffalo to Toledo as coal-passenger on the steamer, and always talked loudly of the rights of the workingman.

"Never another shovelful of coal do I heave fer man or company, if I can git that wad," he huskily whispered. "Never another! I've wanted to be an honest man and work fer a livin', but what's the use? P'raps it's in the blood. Or may be it's the name! When a boy's parents name him so that he is compelled to go through life as 'Mad Jones,' what's to be expected? A man has got to be either a villain or a lunatic if he is called Mad Jones!"

He lifted himself a little and caught his breath with a gasping sound.

"Ah! there they come! Both together. But I can do 'em both."

Jack Ready and Greg Carker had walked into view and now came slowly along. They were the camera fiends of Frank Merriwell's Athletic Team and they had been out along the lake shore in search of views suitable for the lens.

Merriwell's party was now at Granada Heights, the guests of the Toledo Blades, whose captain and principal member had been a passenger on the steamer that brought the Athletic Team from Buffalo to Toledo. The Toledo Blades was the appropriate name of an organization of clever and lively young men of the Ohio city who delighted in athletics and out-of-door life and sports. By a plentiful use of money and a good deal of artistic taste, they had changed a rough woodland on the lake shore into a handsome park, adorned with a club-house of Moorish design, the whole of which they called Granada Heights.

After overwhelmingly defeating the Toronto baseball-team at Niagara Falls, Merriwell's team had gone to Buffalo and thence by lake to Toledo, and were soon to meet the Toledo Blades at that city in a field contest. Just now they were enjoying the lake breezes and the cool shade at Granada Heights, to the great delight of lazy Bruce Browning, who unblushingly confessed that he liked nothing better than to lie around and doze and dream all day, and that sports of

all kinds were a weariness to the flesh. He even went so far as to declare that games and sports of all kinds were designed and pursued by fools for insane purposes of self-torture, and that he was an utter idiot to permit his friends to drag him into them. But it was noticeable that when he once went in, no devotee ever fought more fiercely for his faith than lazy Bruce did for the honor of an honorable victory.

"The whole world does nothing but make pictures," Greg Carker was philosophizing, as he and Ready walked unsuspectingly toward the miscreant who lay hidden in the bushes with the deadly slung-shot.

"We haven't made many this morning," Ready chirped, swinging his camera as if to be ready for a snap-shot in case a deer leaped from the bushes or an aeronaut dropped from the clouds. "I've chased my face all morning and seen nothing but that pile of rocks with the waves washing their feet with soap-suds—the feet of the rocks, I mean—and the hawk sailing over them.

"O'er all that flutter their wings and fly
A hawk is hovering in the sky!"

The way that hawk hovered over us he must have thought we were winged rabbits."

The bored look deepened in Carker's thin, intellectual face. It annoyed him to have Ready indulge in chatter when he wanted to philosophize.

"The average man doesn't understand that life,

from the cradle to the grave, is simply an endless making of pictures. While we are young we build our Castles in Spain."

"Moorish architecture, something like the clubhouse at Granada Heights!" Ready interrupted.

"We build our fairy castles and fill them with pictures of the things we are to do, the lives we are to lead, the worlds we are to conquer. The pictures are high-colored, with lots of sunset gold and silver-lined clouds in them. We see ourselves riding in a chariot of triumph over streets of gold, with Mammon chained to the wheels, and the world crowding round us with applauding hands.

"When we grow old we continue to make pictures—memory-pictures, filled with the scenes and faces of the past. We put our loved ones in the gallery of the saints and paint halos round their heads and give to them a beauty which was never theirs in life."

"And we take snap-shots of the big fish we used to catch when we were boys, forgetting the little ones!" Ready airily continued. "The pictures always show us licking the other fellow, and never getting licked. In those pictures, the brooks we used to swim are raging seas and the sand dunes we scuffed over are cloud-capped mountains. The sweetheart of our boyhood days has cheeks as red as a new mowing-machine. We see her welcoming us with a smile as broad and cheerful as that of a catfish. Here in the West

you must always say catfish, Mr. Carker, and never horned pout! If you should say here that the lips of a girl were like those of a pout, the people would probably think that you meant to insinuate that she had a bad temper and that——”

Madison Jones had lifted himself as Carker and Ready drew nearer; but now he sank down with an exclamation of disappointment and disgust.

“Not the fellers at all!” he was grumbling. “I’ll bet the ten-cent piece I threw away that they took the other path. I reckon these idiots belong to the Merriwell crowd.”

“Didn’t you fancy you saw something move in those bushes?” Ready asked, dropping his jocular tone.

“Some small animal or bird, I suppose,” Greg answered.

“You’re right, I guess. These woods are so thick I’ve been half-expecting a polar bear to prance out and pose for us. Go on with your picture-making. It’s the only kind we’ll have this morning. Or, if you want to stir up those bushes and anything hops out, I’ll snap it and divide with you.”

But Carker preferred not to poke into the bushes. His head was full of poetic fancies, which he wanted to pour out, even if Ready seemed unappreciative; so they walked on by the clump where Madison Jones lay with gripped slung-shot, and were soon beyond his reach.

After a time they left the path, for it seemed to be taking them farther from the club-house, to which they wished to return, and swung into a faint trail that bisected the path to which Jones' disappointed thoughts had gone and to which he had hurried as soon as they were far enough away to permit him to leave his hiding-place without being seen by them.

"I drew a blank in the picture lottery that time," said Ready, as he caught his foot in a vine and tripped, pitching the camera forward in an endeavor to catch himself, and accidentally clicking the button. "I wish we had continued along the lake shore. We could have got some rock views, if nothing else."

"Here is a wider path," said Carker. "We'd better follow it. It seems to go straight toward the club-house."

Again Carker and Ready turned, and in so doing missed a fearful scene, which at that moment might have been visible to their eyes only a few feet away if the screen of bushes had not shut it from them.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A MURDEROUS BLOW.

"Aw! I'm disgusted with you, don't you know!"

The shot was fired at Herbert Hammerswell by his friend Delancy Livingston.

Hammerswell stopped in the path, with flushing face, though the flush was caused more by the liquor he had recently swallowed than by anything else.

"What do you mean by that?" he demanded.

"You're steaming all the time, don't you know, and I don't like it. I don't like a man who all the time tries to keep his spirits up by pouring spirits down!"

"Do you mean to insinuate that I'm drunk?" Hammerswell asked.

"Aw! I mightn't go so far as that, you know, but I haven't seen you really sober since we were at Niagara. You got such a fright there, when you thought you had drowned Merriwell and found you hadn't, and when you fell into the river, don't you know, that you've been bracing yourself ever since. I don't mind if a fellow takes a drink now and then, but when he, aw! simply saturates himself with the stuff, it makes me sick."

Madison Jones was in another clump of bushes some distance away, but by parting the leaves he could

see the two youths quarreling in the path, and his grip of the slung-shot cord tightened.

"The two of them together, and the right ones this time! That Delancy's got the roll, and I've an idea that the other feller's pockets are lined, too. I can knock 'em both out, and I'll do it."

He pulled up some earth and rubbed it harshly into his face, to darken and disguise it, and plastered his hair with leaves and sticks.

"They'll think I'm the Wild Man from Borneo, when I jump out onto them from these bushes, and they'll be so scairt they won't think of makin' a fight. I wish they'd stop that pow-wow-ing and come on!"

"I've had only one drink this morning!" Hammerswell blustered. "And I'll thank you to attend to your own affairs."

"You must have taken it in a lager-beer schooner, then!" was Delancy's unruffled reply. "I shall quit you dead cold, don't you know, if you keep it up! You were steaming all the way over on the boat, and you've been at it ever since. I can see that the club fellows are getting as tired of it as I am. They thought we were gentlemen, don't you know, when they invited us out here!"

"Why don't they come on?" Madison Jones was growling. "I'm gittin' nervous layin' here waitin' fer 'em."

"The fellow that invited us up here was my friend,"

Delancy went on, "and he supposed that you were a gentleman because you were my friend, and so the invitation was given to you. But the Blades of Toledo will politely tell us that our room is better than our company, if you go on this way. Aw! I'm sick of it, don't you know! I'm horribly sick of it!"

"I've got to steam up if I'm to carry out any plans to beat Merriwell. There is something about the fellow that takes my courage away from me when I come near him. I don't feel so when I've had a drink. I was shaken up by that Niagara business, I admit; but I'll let up just as soon as I've evened the score with Merriwell. I didn't expect to find him at Granada Heights, but he has come here. I thought he wouldn't go out of Toledo. But he's here, and again the chance to do him up has come. I can't miss it."

Hammerswell seemed to become more sober as he talked.

"I will have nothing to do with anything of that kind!" Delancy declared. "Aw! you're a villain, Hammerswell, don't you know! You're a bloody villain!"

Hammerswell smiled drunkenly. He regarded this as a compliment.

"Perhaps I am a villain. It takes villainy to match villainy. I'm going to do up Frank Merriwell, if I hang for it!"

Delancy turned away in anger and disgust.

"Drop that, or I'll cut you dead!"

Then he walked away from Hammerswell, moving along the path in the direction of the concealed ruffian, while Hammerswell stared at him, uncertain what to do or say.

"Comin' on alone!" Madison Jones whispered. "The feller with the wad. Asked him fer help a while ago and he gimme a dime! He'd ought to have his head ripped open fer that. Gimme a dime to keep the wolf out o' the front yard—a dime! Blast him! I'll give him an extra welt fer that. A dime! and he and t'other feller won five hundred dollars at poker on the boat comin' over from Buffalo! Settin' in the saloons playin' cards like kings, and me breakin' my back and burnin' my eyes out and sweatin' myself to rags heavin' coal to keep the engines runnin' to carry them across! A dime!"

The snarling exclamation seemed to choke him. Delancy Livingston walked straight on, swinging his cane and fuming, and soon was hidden from the sight of Herbert Hammerswell.

"Aw! I'll have to cut the fellow dead cold!" he was thinking. "I've been a fool to continue with him as I have. I don't like Merriwell a little bit, but I'm not going to be continually poking my neck into a halter to get even with him, don't you know! Only an idiot would do that. Hammerswell's drinking like a fish to give him enough courage to continue his work against Merriwell. But I'm out of the game. Yet

there was a swell way about the fellow that I liked, before he got to steaming so outrageously."

Nearer and nearer he came to the concealed form. He passed the bushes so near that Jones could have touched him with outstretched hand. Then Jones rose up; and, with a gurgling gasp which caused Delancy to turn half-round, he swung the heavy slung-shot and felled the youth in the path. Delancy Livingston threw up his hands and pitched forward on his face without a cry.

"Killed him, I reckon!" the ruffian whispered, half in fear; and, dropping the slung-shot in the path, he began a hurried search of Delancy's pockets.

"Ah! here it is!" he snarled, as he nervously drew out a roll of bills. "The very wad he fished up when he gimme the dime. I allowed he'd have it with him yit!"

Then he went through other pockets, and, not finding more money, was about to relieve Delancy of his watch, when he heard an exclamation, and saw a form bound toward him through the bushes. It was Frank Merriwell, who had chanced to be walking near.

This unexpected interference was so startling, for Frank seemed to have risen right out of the undergrowth by the path, and the look in Frank's eyes was so fear-inspiring, that Jones rose to his feet.

"You murderer!" came from Merriwell's lips, as he saw the senseless form on the ground.

Another leap would have taken him upon the shivering and startled wretch, who would not have cared if the prospect had been of an encounter with Herbert Hammerswell.

Frank's muscular hand seemed reaching out to grasp the miscreant, and Jones, filled with a terror he could not understand, turned about in a headlong flight that took him tearing through the bushes like a madman. Merriwell picked up the slung-shot, and the roll of bills which Jones had dropped in his fright, and stooped over Delancy.

As he did so he thrust a hand into Delancy's bosom to ascertain if there were any heart beats. He heard a cry and glanced up. Herbert Hammerswell was racing down the path toward him, accompanied by Leverett Osgood, one of the leaders of the Toledo Blades, who had come up with Hammerswell in the path but a moment before.

CHAPTER XXIV.

MERRIWELL ACCUSED.

The blow which felled Delancy Livingston was delivered with sufficient force to kill, if it had fallen fairly, but it had fallen glancingly, and Delancy's cap had somewhat served as a shield. Not only was Delancy's heart beating, but he was returning to consciousness as Merriwell stooped above him; and as Merriwell heard that cry from Hammerswell and turned, Delancy rolled half over on his side, and stared dazedly up into Merriwell's face.

He vaguely knew that he had been stricken down, and it seemed to him that Merriwell's was the hand that had done the work.

Hammerswell came down the path with quick, fierce strides and strangely working features, closely followed by Osgood. Unfortunately, Osgood, who was not especially popular with the club members, though he was one of the wealthiest and consequently one of the most influential, had disliked Frank from the first, probably because Merry was a popular idol and he was not—for it is the nature of some men to become jealous of those who possess what they desire and cannot get. In addition to this, Osgood had lent a listening and credulous ear to some of the damaging stories against Merriwell's character and reputation which

Herbert Hammerswell always delighted to repeat to any who would hear them.

Delancy Livingston's uncertain gaze wandered from Merry's face to the slung-shot and the roll of bills.

"You struck me down like a dog!" he gurgled, as Frank turned back for the purpose of assisting him and at the same time dropped the money and the weapon. "You're a murderous scoundrel, don't you know!"

Hammerswell and young Osgood heard and understood the words, though so gurglingly spoken. A wild joy filled the heart of the youth who had, as Frank's enemy, so persistently dogged his steps. He thought he saw the evidences of the truth of the accusation in the bills and the slung-shot and in Frank's attitude with hand beneath Delancy's coat at the moment they sighted him round the turn in the path.

In spite of this, Herbert came to a hesitating halt. He wanted to accuse Merriwell of this murderous assault, but felt cowed, in spite of the courage given him by the liquor he had taken. Yet he quickly rallied and blustered:

"You are a murderous scoundrel, Merriwell, as I've always known, and this proves it!"

Merriwell rose to his feet with a dangerous glitter in his eyes. His right fist was clenched, and he restrained himself with difficulty from striking the coward.

"Hammerswell, you're a liar by the clock!"

"There is the proof!" Hammerswell continued, while Frank began to laugh. "You had that slung-shot and the roll of money in your hands, and you were searching for more money, or for his watch. Osgood saw you as well as I."

"And I saw 'im!" declared Delancy, weakly attempting to rise. "He struck me down with that thing and then robbed me. I saw the money, too."

Osgood was silent, though his face showed a readiness to accept this belief. If Hammerswell's cowardly nature had not been given a false strength by his potations he would have taken warning from Frank's dangerous laugh. But now he saw in it an indication of confusion and fear and his bravado increased.

"You can't scare me by your threats, Merriwell! You tried to murder and rob——"

Crack!

Merriwell's white fist shot out and Hammerswell reeled backward in the path, and was only kept from falling by the outstretched arms of Leverett Osgood.

"This is an outrage, Merriwell!" Osgood hotly panted. "If a fellow flies into a rage, it's mighty good proof, as a rule, that he is guilty!"

Frank turned on Osgood with flashing eyes.

"I stand ready to settle with such fellows as these, at any place and any time, though I know that I dis-

grace myself by noticing them. Go for a carriage for Livingston!"

There was something in the words and manner that made Osgood jump as if he had been touched by a galvanic battery.

"A carriage at once!" Frank repeated. "I'm sure this fellow is worse hurt than he thinks he is!"

"Certainly!" said Osgood, and he ran back along the path to obey the order and hurry help at once.

Hammerswell was now standing very erect and white, though his face a moment before had been red with drink and excitement. His rage burned like a furnace.

"You have hit me, Merriwell—a cowardly blow! I'll not forget it. You struck Delancy down and tried to rob him. I think I understand why, for lately I've heard that you've been hard up and pressed for money. You are bound to keep up your reputation, even if you have to resort to such means to enable you to do it. We have the evidence, and we'll make it interesting for you. You have sent Osgood away, thinking that while he is gone you can scare me, but you can't scare me."

Merriwell understood the change in Hammerswell's manner, for he had known that Hammerswell was getting courage from the flowing bowl. Nevertheless, it was with great difficulty that he restrained himself

from again striking the man who stood thus tauntingly before him.

Delancy Livingston again made a weak effort to crawl to his feet, and this time succeeded, picking up the roll of bills and thrusting them into a pocket as he did so.

"Yes, we'll make it hot for you, Merriwell!" he declared. "You struck me down like a dog, don't you know, and I'll not forget it, nor forgive it! I might have thought that you didn't, if I hadn't seen the evidence with my own eyes."

"Hammerswell is drinking, and so is hardly responsible for what he says, and only a coward would strike a man in your condition. I've sent for a carriage, and I'll stay by and help you into it, if you wish."

Frank was again calm and collected. He wanted to take Hammerswell by the throat and choke him, but he controlled the inclination.

"As for you, Hammerswell, you're a cur on whom it is not worth while to waste words. You have dogged my footsteps from the Adirondacks to Toledo. Perhaps you think it will be safe for you to keep it up, but I want to tell you that you are mistaken. I have let you alone when I ought to have hammered you into the earth. But patience has ceased to be a virtue. And now I warn you that if you continue this I shall punish you in a way that you will remember as long

as you live. You followed me around this way last summer—you and your father. The limit has been reached!"

The color came again into Hammerswell's face. He saw that Frank was in deadly earnest; and, in spite of the liquor, the old fear of Merriwell crept back into his mean little heart.

"I—I——"

"You have heard what I have to say. Remember it and act on it, or you will live to regret it. You talk to me about murderous intentions, when you have hired men to maim or assassinate me, when you were too cowardly to undertake anything of the kind yourself. But I have recognized the hand back of it all. When I do strike you, I will strike to pulverize!"

He turned again to Delancy, who looked woefully weak and white, but who, in spite of his condition, had more real courage at that moment than Hammerswell had ever had in his life.

"Shall I stay and help you? Some one ought to be looking after the fellow who struck you down. I saw him, and he ran in that direction when I jumped through the bushes at him."

"Don't bother about that phantom—for he's just a phantom, don't you know!" Delancy sneered. "I think I don't want your help, thank you, though my head is spinning round, and I feel like a chicken with a wrung neck."

"Very well, then!" was Merriwell's curt rejoinder; and he left the path and set out for the club-house, intending to report and send out searchers for the miscreant who had fled.

On the way he met Bruce Browning, who came hopping down a path as light footed as a colt. Browning had heard that Delancy had been stricken down, and also that Merriwell was in trouble of some kind, though just what he had not been able to find out, for Osgood had made a statement, and hurried away after sending a man for a carriage.

"Just when I'm thinking you're in some sort of a tarnation scrape, you rise up before me like *Hamlet's* ghost!" Bruce drawled, stopping in the path in front of his friend.

Merriwell smiled.

"By Jove, old boy! I thought you were too lazy to run like that."

"Easily explained," droned Browning. "Laziness runs in our family."

"No need for laziness to run now. Walk back to the club-house with me, and I'll tell you what has happened. I tried to help an idiot back there, and he turned on me like a warmed rattlesnake."

CHAPTER XXV.

AT GRANADA HEIGHTS.

There was a tremendous undercurrent of excitement at Granada Heights that forenoon; though, after the first ebullition, everything looked quiet enough on the surface. Hammerswell and Delancy Livingston had departed for Toledo, after telling their story to the club members, and Leverett Osgood, who had backed their assertions, had gone with them.

Merriwell saw and heard all, but explained only to his friends, feeling that he could not assert his innocence of the ridiculous charge to the members of the club whose guest he was. If they were inclined to believe the three who had departed, the only course for him was to leave also; otherwise he could do nothing but remain until the expiration of his visit. To go to the members and tell them that he could not be guilty of attempted murder and robbery was a thing he could not think of, even though he felt that some of them, particularly the friends of Osgood, probably believed the story.

But he was set at rest by a call from Merret Palmer, the captain of the Blades, a splendid young fellow, who was accompanied by Bennett Saulsbury and Sidney Gail.

"We take no stock in that story, Merriwell!" Pal-

mer warmly and cordially declared. "We thought you might think that we did if we stayed away, that's all."

Nearly all of Merriwell's friends were in the room at the time of this visit.

"We have men out looking for the fellow you described, and I've no doubt he will be captured."

"Osgood is a pretty good fellow," said Gail, "but he's likely to go off half-cocked in his opinions and to jump at conclusions that make a man stare. We are sincerely sorry for his attitude in this matter, but we don't want you to feel that it reflects the sentiments of the club."

"Yes, we know that you're all right, Merriwell," chimed in Saulsbury. "We heard of you and your friends long before you reached Toledo; and, when we learned that on the voyage down the lake you had arranged with Merret to meet the Blades in field sports, we were simply delighted. Not that we think we can easily defeat you, but because we know that it was an honor to compete with your team. We know your record at Yale and the records of your friends. As for Hammerswell and Livingston, we know nothing about them, except that Delancy is an acquaintance of Osgood, and through him they were invited to Granada Heights. But as for myself, I'm glad the fellows have cut out; all but Osgood, I mean. As he

is a member of the club, we feel called on to apologize for his conduct in this matter."

"The story is simply too silly to listen to!" Bart Hodge growled. "The idea that Merriwell could do a thing like that!"

"It makes me cot under the holler!" sputtered Ratleton.

"We'll not allow it to interfere in any way with the contest?" said the captain, in a questioning way, looking at Frank.

"We are still ready to meet your organization on the day and hour named," was Frank's answer. "I am sorry the thing occurred, and that I have been so misjudged, but it's just what I could expect from Hammerswell. He's been trying to injure me for a long time. But it won't amount to anything. I want you to know, though, that I am grateful for your confidence."

Bart had been raging against Hammerswell, and again broke out, when the captain and his companions were gone.

"I'm only sorry, Merry, that you didn't hammer the face off the scoundrel!" he snarled. "If I had been there, I'd have done it for you. He keeps away from me, for he knows I won't stand any nonsense from him."

"After you saved Livingston from being mobbed

and rundered—I mean robbed and murdered, for him to turn against you that way!” grumbled Rattleton.

“We’ll try not to let it disturb us,” said Frank.

“But if they should have you arrested?” asked Danny.

“If it were you, I should say for them to go ahead,” chirped Bink. “It would give us a rest!”

“I’ve only one wish for you,” retorted Danny, “and that is that you may live to be as old as your jokes.”

“Doesn’t such nonsense annoy you?” queried Carker, addressing Frank.

“Oh, no. I used to work in an old saw-factory!”

Then Carker stared, for he failed to see the teeth of the pun, but Bink and Danny howled.

“If you’d only given Hammerswell what he deserved!” snarled Hodge, paying no attention to what the others had said.

“You would despise a man who would strike a drunken coward, no matter how insulting the latter might be, wouldn’t you?” Merry demanded. “That is the way I felt. I wanted to knock Hammerswell down, and I so far forgot myself as to strike him. But I regretted it instantly. To have gone further, or to strike Delancy in the condition he was then in, would have been the essence of cowardice.”

“I’m for pulling out of this game, anyway,” Bart went on. “I looked for a fine time here in Toledo. But you are queered here now, no matter what may

be said or done. Likely you will be arrested, and there will be some who will fancy that you may be guilty. It makes me sick and mad. I'm in favor of going on to Chicago, and letting Toledo go by. We're out for sport and pleasure this summer, not worriment."

It was a long speech for Hodge in his present temper, but he felt strongly on the subject.

"Oh, we'll stay and do up the Toledo Blades," grunted Browning. "But I'm not in any hurry to get away from Granada Heights. I haven't found a more comfortable place this summer, not even in the Adirondacks."

"We have arranged to meet them, and I've no disposition to back down from the arrangement," was Merriwell's comment. "I think we will have some fine sport. They have a runner that I want to put Gamp and Swiftwing against."

"And me!" piped Danny.

"There will be work for you, my boy, and for all of us. The Blades of Toledo are not likely to be easy."

"Aw! he must anticipate an arrest, don't you know!"

Delancy Livingston put up his monocle and stared at Frank Merriwell, who was passing along the street in front of the hotel with Merret Palmer, the captain of the Toledo Blades.

Delancy's words were intended for Herbert Ham-

merswell, who lounged in a chair at his side and also looked down into the street from the window of the hotel.

"The fuses are all laid and the mine is ready for the explosion," said Hammerswell, with a scowl.

"I can't see why the officers fail to move in the matter, don't you know! The fellow is walking the streets of Toledo as if he owned the place and had put a fence around it. I don't like it. Why don't they move against him? That's what I should like to understand, don't you know!"

This was answered by an owlish look of wisdom.

"The thing is—hic—all right, Delancy. Lines all laid for the explosion. It will come to-night. Going to be a good one. Red fire and rockets and all that. Just you don't go to becoming excited, and it will be all right."

"Oh, you're disgustedly drunk again, and I don't like it! You're throwing away your money like a fool, too. You'll—— Aw! I don't want to talk to you when you get that way!"

"'Sh all right!" Hammerswell assured. "Everything's all right. Trust to yer uncle. When I lay a plan, that plan's good one, and don't ye forget it! This best plan I ever laid. When it happens, make these—hic—Toledo Blades think 'the sky is fallin' down on their poor bald heads an' they better see the king!'"

He looked as grave as an undertaker while quoting this classic of the nursery.

"What's your plan?" Delancy demanded, putting down the eye-glass and turning on him, when Merriwell had passed from sight.

"Tha's all right, too!"

Hammerswell was intoxicated, but not enough to lose his caution. His plan was spectacular, and he feared Delancy might object to it, for Delancy had been filled with objections lately.

Merriwell and his party had returned to Toledo, whither they had been preceded by Hammerswell, Livingston, and Leverett Osgood; and Delancy, having left the details to Hammerswell, was irritated to see Merriwell still walking the streets when he fancied Frank ought to be in jail or under arrest.

"When are you going to stop this drinking, Hammerswell?" he demanded. Hammerswell tried to straighten up and look extremely sober.

"I sha'n't take 'nother drink to-day—not 'nother drink!"

In spite of his drunken mood, he meant it, dimly realizing that what he now needed to carry on his plan was shrewdness rather than the brute courage he had sought for through liquor. Delancy turned away. He did not believe that Hammerswell was in earnest, or could carry out his promise.

"G'-by!" called Herbert, flabbily waving his hand

as Delancy walked off. "See you later. Plan's all right!"

Then he crept away to his own room and to bed, not to emerge until evening, when he came forth white-faced and sober, with shaky limbs and a cowardly heart, but more crafty and vindictive than ever.

"Aw! I should have liked an invitation to that German, don't you know!" was Delancy's salutation, his reference being to a dinner and German given that night by Merret Palmer and other members of the Toledo Blades in honor of the visiting team of Yale athletes.

"I shouldn't have gone if I'd had one!" Hammerswell snarled. "It would make me sick to be in that crowd. The Blades are going wild over Merriwell, even after what he has done—after that attempt to murder and rob you!"

He did not want Delancy to forget that.

"Aw! I think I should have liked an invitation. Some stunning girls there to-night, you know! Rich, too. It makes me feel deuced uncomfortable not to be going, when the thing is for the Blades and their friends, I understand."

He put up his eye-glass and ogled a young lady who was passing.

"Aw! deuced handsome!" he murmured. "Right clever girls out here, don't you know! And I wouldn't have believed it."

"Better be cautious," Hammerswell warned. "That was Merret Palmer's sister. The chap with her gave you a black look. They're on their way to the dinner, I suppose. It wasn't given by the Blades as an organization, but only by certain members, and that's why we were left out. You see, if it were given by the Blades, Osgood would have invited us."

"And that is why——"

"Yes, that accounts for the milk in the cocoanut. If the Blades had given it as an organization, Osgood would have asked us, and to the other fellows we are *non persona grata*."

"Aw! confound them!"

"But I'll be there!" said Hammerswell, with a fierce look. "I shall smuggle myself in, for that red-fire-and-rocket business will take place in the ballroom after the supper."

"Aw!" and Delancy stared through his eye-glass. "You said you wouldn't go?"

"In my proper person. I shall smuggle myself in. If you're clever, you can do the same. It will be worth it."

Hammerswell smuggled himself in, by the aid of a bribe, and blacked as a waiter; and when the officer who had been sent to make the arrest, and who also had fingered some of Hammerswell's money, pushed into the big dining-room from which the chairs had been removed, and where the dancing was in progress,

Hammerswell stood in a side entrance and watched him with a sort of ghoulish glee. At that moment his heart was blacker than his face.

Merriwell was dancing with Fannie Palmer, Merret Palmer's sister. The room was crowded with the whirling, swaying figures of handsomely gowned girls and women and with clever and witty men. Every member of the Toledo Blades was there, with the exception of Leverett Osgood and a few of his cronies, and all had vied with each other in making the evening pleasant for the Yale athletes.

"It will kill him!" Hammerswell whispered, restraining his joy with difficulty. "The disgrace of being arrested here will kill him. This is a revenge worth working for! This is even better than maiming him or injuring him in any other way. He is as proud as Lucifer, and the thing will tear his heart out."

It was well for him that his face was blacked, for its working and the fire which suffused it would otherwise have been noticeable. The officer walked across the room, pushing the dancers aside, and, approaching Merriwell, laid a hand on his shoulder.

"I arrest you, sir, for assault with intent to kill!" he said in a loud voice. "You will come with me!"

Fannie Palmer swayed on Merriwell's arm as if about to swoon, while Merriwell's face flamed like fire.

Women gasped and shrieked, and a half-dozen members of the club pushed forward, among them young Palme himself.

"This is a shame!" Hammerswell heard Palmer say. "If you had a warrant you could have served it in some more appropriate place. We will become his sureties in any amount needed."

"That's all right," the officer sneered. "But I know my duty. This young man is charged with an assault with intent to commit murder. I have the papers issued to me in legal form. He goes with me!"

"But——"

"If he can get the judge to admit him to bail, all right; otherwise, I shall land him in jail and hold him there."

Hammerswell fairly hugged himself in delight.

"Oh, it's a glorious revenge!" he panted, leaning eagerly forward. "A glorious revenge! Frank Merriwell, you now feel the hand of Herbert Hammerswell. I've got Delancy and Osgood as witnesses against you, and if we don't make you smoke, then I'm a liar and an idiot."

The protests of Merret and other members of the club were of no avail, and Hammerswell had the great pleasure of seeing Frank led from the dancing-room under arrest.

CHAPTER XXVI.

BART LOSES HIS TONGUE.

Crack! whack! crack!

Bart Hodge's hard knuckles played a tattoo on Herbert Hammerswell's face.

"Take that! and that! and that!"

Hammerswell staggered backward.

"Stand up like a man, you booby!" Bart snarled.

"Stand up and meet me!"

Hammerswell saved himself from a fall by catching at the fence back of him, and then clung to it as if for protection. The German had been broken up by the arrest of Merriwell the night before, and though Merret Palmer and the leading members of the Blades of Toledo had secured Merriwell's release by becoming his bondmen, the justice before whom the preliminary hearing was held had been so impressed by the evidence brought forward by Hammerswell, Livingston, and Osgood that he had scored Frank in a talk from the bench in which the guilt of the accused was strongly intimated. The day had been a humiliating one to Frank and his friends; and now, meeting Hammerswell by chance, Hodge had permitted his anger to get the better of him.

"I'll have you arrested for this!" Herbert panted, a look of deep fear in his eyes.

"And if you do, I'll pay the fine and lick you again as soon as the thing is over. Come on and defend yourself!"

"I don't want to fight!" Hammerswell whined, still clinging to the fence.

"Merry thinks that it is cowardly to strike a fellow as I have hit you, when that fellow is a coward and no fighter—that it's too much like a big dog jumping on a little one. But I don't care anything for that. You deserve to have your face hammered in, and I'm the boy to do it!"

"Let me go!" Hammerswell begged.

"Stand up and strike back, you sneak! Stand up before I knock you through the fence!"

"Don't hit me again! Please don't hit me again!"

"You white-livered puppy! Do you know what I want to do to you?"

He advanced threateningly, and Hammerswell, shrieking in fear, started to run. But Bart put out a foot, and the pusillanimous miscreant went down in a groveling heap.

"Don't strike me! Don't strike me! I'll do anything, if you——"

"Get up!" Bart fiercely commanded.

"Yes, yes!"

"Get up before I'm tempted to kick you into ribbons. Get up, I say!"

Hammerswell sprang up and again started to run;

but fell once more, this time across a wide board, which in his terror he did not see. Delancy came racing across as if to help his friend.

"I'll polish you off, just as soon as I get through with this fellow!" Bart exclaimed; then deliberately walked up to Hammerswell, who was floundering and threshing in an effort to rise, and administered to him a vigorous spanking with a bit of shingle which lay in the path, whereupon Hammerswell bawled like a whipped schoolboy.

"Now I'm ready for you!" Hodge cried, turning to Delancy, as Hammerswell scrambled up.

"Aw! I feel like caning you, don't you know!" drawled Delancy, swinging his cane and putting up his eye-glass. Bart faced him fiercely.

"Even if you are a simpering dude, you're more of a man than Herbert Hammerswell. If you want to defend him or defend yourself, put up your hands, or come at me. I'm ready for you."

Delancy retreated, flourishing the cane.

"Aw! I'm not a fighter, you know. I leave fighting to bulldogs and pugilists, don't you know!"

For a moment Hodge seemed about to strike him; but he checked the impulse.

"I think Merry is right. I can't hit you, unless you are willing to stand up and fight. But you're a cad!"

"Aw! you're another, don't you know!" Delancy declared, again putting up the eye-glass in that irri-

tating way, as if Bart were some sort of insect that he wished to inspect. Hammerswell was backing off, as if he feared Bart might again come at him.

"Hit him, Delancy!" he urged. "Hit him!"

"Aw! hit him yourself!" was the retort.

"That's right. Come at me, both of you—both of you at once!"

But Hammerswell did not care to try anything of the kind, and Delancy seemed to get all the satisfaction he wanted simply by swinging his cane at Bart and staring at him through the eye-glass.

"You're cowards and cads, both of you!" Bart hissed. "I shall forget that, though, and that it's beneath the dignity of any honest man to strike you, and hammer you to pieces if you don't keep out of Merry's way, and out of the way of ever member of the Athletic Team. I don't want you to tempt me, for I can't stand much!"

Hammerswell shivered under Bart's glance, and Delancy Livingston had a cold, creepy sensation of fear as he retreated, again swinging his cane.

"Remember it!" said Bart; then turned and walked quickly away, for he observed some men approaching, and did not care to be seen publicly quarreling or bandying words with the creatures whom he so despised.

CHAPTER XXVII.

DANNY HAS SAND.

The beautiful grounds of the Blades of Toledo, on the Maumee River, drew an immense crowd on the afternoon of the day set for the field contests between Merriwell's team and the Blades. The day was propitious, the sky bright, and the promise of sport good; but there was, nevertheless, a shadow over everything, deeply felt by Frank and his friends and by the members of the entertaining organization.

The feeling that Frank was in great danger from the charge which had been lodged against him, and the testimony with which it had been supported, could not be shaken off. This feeling was not groundless; for when the circumstantial evidence in the case was dispassionately examined it was found to be strongly, against Merriwell.

Delancy Livingston, Herbert Hammerswell and Leverett Osgood were all positive in their statements. They had seen Frank bending over Delancy, who had been stricken down in a cowardly way, and had seen, in his grasp the slung-shot and a roll of bills, and had beheld him, as they supposed, searching Delancy for other valuables or money. Against this could be produced nothing but Merriwell's unsupported declara-

tion of innocence and his assertion that he had interrupted the real thief and frightened him away.

None felt the weight of the evidence against Frank more than did Merret Palmer, the captain of the Blades, though Merret was personally sure of Frank's entire innocence. He had talked with Osgood, but could not shake Osgood's story in the least. Osgood believed that Merriwell was guilty, and he intended to say so when the time came for the regular trial.

The feeling of pride with which the Toledo athletic men and prominent citizens, as well as the newspapers, had welcomed Merriwell and his friends, had given way to an uncomfortable suspicion which was very unpleasant. And, though the newspaper comments on the charge against Merriwell were guarded and infrequent, there was in them a noticeable lack of cordiality.

"This whole business makes me awfully hot!" Bart asserted, as he stood talking of the situation to young Palmer while the crowd filed into the grounds. "I have heard a lot of these people talking, and more than half of them, I believe, have come to see Merriwell, not because he is a great athlete, but simply because he is suspected of an attempt to rob and kill Delancy Livingston. It not only makes me hot, but it makes me sick!"

"There is a good deal of that sort of feeling," Palmer reluctantly admitted. "I don't want you to say

anything to Merriwell about it, but one of the best lawyers in the city told me yesterday that he believed Merriwell is in danger of being sent to prison. The charge is all rot, of course, and I have confidence that the right will win, but the way things have turned makes the case look black. I'm sure, though, that Merriwell's former good name will break the force of the charge and secure his release."

This was not at all satisfactory to Bart Hodge, who fairly ground his teeth at the thought that any one could for a moment suspect Merriwell of anything criminal or dishonorable. Frank came sauntering toward them as they talked. In his face was the sunshine of a good conscience and abounding health. He did not seem to be troubling himself about the black charge against him.

"A fine day," he said, as he came up. "I believe that my men are all in tip-top condition."

He looked out on the field, where Gamp and Ready were racing and leaping, and other members of the team were engaging in various warming-up exercises.

From a seat on the bleachers, to which he had surreptitiously crept, Herbert Hammerswell glanced at the field, then turned his gaze, full of malevolent hate, on Frank and Bart. He had disguised himself by assuming cheap clothing and by slightly darkening his face and wearing a small, sandy-colored mustache.

"I've got you in a bad hole, old man!" was his

thought, as he eyed Merriwell. "I've had you in tight places before, but never in so close a one. If you don't go to the penitentiary, all signs will fail."

Delancy had not come to the field—had declared that he did not want to come and would not come, simply because he was more disgusted than ever with Hammerswell's childish exhibition of cowardice in his encounter with Hodge. As Merriwell turned back toward the benches, Danny Griswold came out of a dressing-room clad in a suit of unsoilable old clothes.

"What's he up to now?" was Frank's thought. "He looks like a miniature ragman."

Another diminutive chap had emerged from another dressing-room, and a man was standing on a ladder applying something with a broad brush to the flagpole that rose in front of the grand stand.

Rattleton ran beamingly toward Frank.

"Banny's got a debt—I mean Danny's got a bet—with little Partridge that he can beat him climbing a greased pole; and they're getting ready. It will be a nicpic—a picnic to see them."

The crowd was laughing and cheering the man who was applying the grease to the pole, while Danny, having now pranced into full view, posed like an admiral on the quarterdeck, in spite of his ragamuffin attire.

Curt Partridge was no larger than Danny, though much more slender. He wore a long-tailed coat, and

when he rushed at the pole he looked as much like a spider monkey as a man.

The pole was round and as "slick as grease," and when Partridge tried to climb it he appeared to fall down faster than he could ascend.

"Oh, I'm just practising!" he called to the laughing crowd that was showering him with all sorts of humorous advice. "Wait till I rub all the oil from the old thing, and I'll go up it like a flash."

"Oh, we're waiting!" squealed Danny, who beamed in anticipation of an easy victory. "I don't want to have to wait till these beautiful garments wear out, though!"

Partridge's efforts to ascend the pole were a complete failure. Nothing daunted, Danny advanced with an air of supreme confidence. His hands were in his pockets, and his pockets were bulging.

"Now see me!" he called out. "Everything is easy to the man who knows how."

The crowd shouted.

"Hear the kid calling hisself a man!" one gawky, long-necked fellow yelled rudely.

But Danny was undisturbed. When his hands came out of his pockets, each held a quantity of sand. This he threw on the greased pole, where it stuck and formed something of a rough surface. Up this Danny shinned in a lively manner, stopping at the sand limit

and showering the higher places with more sand from his pockets.

The spectators began to cheer in appreciation of the little fellow's cleverness, for he was working up the pole in a handsome way, due to the aid of the sand.

When he had climbed as high as he cared to go he dropped to the ground, took off his ragged hat, and made a profound bow.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I have shown you that even a greased pole may be climbed by the man who knows how. The only thing that prevents people from ascending in the world is a lack of perseverance. And always remember that you never can succeed unless you've got 'sand'!"

Then he bowed again and retreated amid a din of applauding cheers.

Four men had now been assigned their positions by the clerk of the course, and were lined up at the starting-point ready for the one-hundred-yards dash. Referees, judges, time-keepers, and starter were in their places. Merriwell sat at one side, with the members of his Athletic Team. In the grand stand and bleachers was a brilliant array of color. The dresses and ribbons of the ladies, the blue of Yale, and the red-and-gold of the Toledo Blades made grand stand, grounds, and bleachers blossom like beds of moving flowers.

All eyes were centered on the four men lined up for the one-hundred-yards dash. One of them was

Carker, slender, thin-faced, thin-limbed, and intellectual-looking. Another was Jack Ready, jauntily bearing the Yale Y on his breast, and round and red of cheek, as if he were ending the race, instead of merely holding himself in readiness to begin it.

The other two were Gail, tall and slim, and Broadbent, whose sunken chest and spindle legs made him look like a consumptive, but who was said to be wonderfully fast in the short distances. In addition, Broadbent had a thin face and little, gleaming black eyes like those of a ferret. The men of gambling instincts were placing their money quietly on Broadbent, though the Blades of Toledo objected to betting.

The starter lifted his pistol, and asked the question:

"Are you ready? On the mark! Get set!"

There was a tense straining of limbs, a crouching of bodies, and a swaying of arms as the men answered. Then the pistol cracked, and the runners came down the hard cinder-path with legs flying.

Ready leaped into the lead, and Joe Gamp began to "haw-haw" and screech.

"You're cuc-coming, Ruh-Ruh-Ruh-Ready!" he bawled, his tongue buzzing over the name like a fence splinter in a high wind. The spectators rose up and yelled, while flags and handkerchiefs fluttered.

Then a pretty thing was seen. Broadbent, the spindle-legged and thin-chested, pushed up out of the crowd, overtook Ready and passed him, in spite of all

that Jack could do, and in a mad dash that set the spectators wild, breasted the tape at the finish-line six good yards ahead.

"A pretty dash!" said Merriwell, and the time went up on an announcement-board—"10 1-5 seconds."

For the 120-yards hurdle-race, Bart Hodge and Harry Rattleton were entered, with Bennett Saulsbury and Ralph Morris of the Toledo Blades. Merriwell had a good deal of confidence in Bart's ability to pull out ahead in this hurdle-contest, for Bart had a good eye, was speedy, and, moreover, had practised at hurdles under Merry's personal supervision.

But Morris, who was taller and lighter than Hodge, and seemed to be really quicker on his feet, was the favorite with the betting-men and with most of the spectators. Morris had a hurdle record, too.

"If you've a man who can beat Morris, he's a good one!" was the declaration of Palmer, the captain of the Blades. "He hasn't the wind for a mile run, but he's simply great at hurdles."

There were ten hurdles set ten yards apart, with a fifteen-yard clear start and finish. The height of the hurdles was three feet six inches. At the crack of the starter's pistol, Harry Rattleton got away first, and in such a race a good start is often a big part of the battle. But Harry could not hold his lead. Saulsbury and Bart both passed him.

"Bart's going to win. Whoop!" shrieked Bink

Stubbs, waving his cap. "Climb over them, you old scrapper! Just imagine you're fighting fire or knocking somebody out, and you'll win sure."

It does not require a great deal of jumping-ability for one to be good at hurdles. The aim of the trained hurdler is to barely clear the hurdles, skimming over the tops so closely that he almost grazes them, yet without touching or knocking them over. Instead of running as fast as he can between each leap, and taking the hurdles with no definite number of steps, he takes a certain number of steps between each flight, and reaching each hurdle at the most favorable point for the rise.

Hodge was cleverly taking the hurdles, coming on in fine style, but Bink had hardly begun to shriek and howl his encouragement, when Morris was seen to be gaining. His leap over each bar resembled the rhythmic rising motion of some birds in flight, and he came with the speed of a deer.

"Don't let him do you, Bart!" Danny yelled, wild with excitement.

But Morris came on, passed Bart in a low, easy leap, and beat him out neatly at the finish, the others swinging behind.

The time was 16 1-5 seconds.

"I ought to have won that, Merry!" Hodge confessed in some humiliation, as he stood pantingly by his friend and captain. "But I couldn't get that arrest

and trial out of my mind, even when I felt that Morris was passing me. It's going to be a handicap on the whole team in the same way, I know, for I've heard the fellows talk. They're blue about it, and they're worried. And I'm more worried about it than I like to confess even to you. When I see Hammerswell, I shall have to lick him again."

Merriwell gave him a serious look.

"You've no business to feel that way, Bart. You mustn't feel that way. Put the thing out of your mind, just as I have. No man can do well at anything who carries a load of worry on top of his work. That's what kills people—it will knock out the best man that ever lived! We're going to win these contests, and I'm going to come out of that other thing all right. Just take my word for it and believe with me. You must! Understand? You must!"

"We seem to be getting it in the neck," grunted Bruce, as he loafed uneasily past, looking as calm as an unruffled sea and as strong, yet inwardly disturbed and filled with foreboding.

"Just put your thoughts on winning the hammer-throw and the shot-put. You are not required to fret away any mental fiber over anything else. The fellows who are in the races must look after the races."

Others came to Frank in the same mental stew, and they went away feeling saner and stronger. He had a way of communicating his own inward strength and

mental poise to his friends, and because of it they had won on many a hard-fought field, and were likely to win many more times when everything seemed against them.

"I'm ashamed of you," he at last said to Rattleton, who came up in spluttering dismay. "We're here to win these contests, Harry, and we must win them."

"If we just had Diamond!" said Rattleton, who had raged against the splendid Virginian through jealousy at Niagara, but who admired and loved him just the same.

Joe Gamp and Jack Ready were to contest with Carl Moonlight and "Pepper" Benton in the quarter-mile run. Moonlight was as tall and almost as awkward as Joe Gamp. He was of German parentage, and had an expansive, good-humored face and flaxen hair, and it was expected that the fight between him and the lank New Englander for the finish would be something pretty to see.

"When you see me run, you'll think I'm shod with the slippers of Mercury!" Ready airily declared, as he looked into the face of "Pepper," who was taller than he.

"Sure! And those slippers will make you slip up before you reach the tape-line!" was the answer.

Then the starter's pistol cracked, and with a flashing of white limbs the runners were off, amid an out-

burst of wild cheers and an encouraging flutter of handkerchiefs. Moonlight leaped into the lead, with Ready a close second.

"Ready's crowding him!" said Bruce placidly. "I should like to see some of the fellows pull off a victory. We seem to be getting it in the neck."

"We'll continue to," was Bart's unpleasant answer. "The fellows haven't any heart in the thing. They're thinking of that arrest all the time. What little hope I've got I'm pinning to Gamp. The fellow doesn't wake up till the race is half-over."

"And in a quarter-mile there isn't a great deal of time for waking up."

Ready came on in a splendid burst of speed, but Benton was pushing him closely, with Gamp a yard behind. Then Gamp began to pull toward the front, amid the yells of the Athletic Team and their friends, and the howls of a group of small boys, who were, as usual, Merriwell enthusiasts.

Gamp passed Benton, and then Jack Ready, and began to fight with Moonlight for the lead. Then was seen a beautiful sight. The two fellows lost all their awkwardness. The German threw his yellow head back on his shoulders, pushed out his chest, and, crowding by Gamp, who was right at his shoulder, came down the path like the wind.

For one brief moment it seemed that Gamp would be the winner, and Danny and Bink were dancing with

joy. Then Moonlight spurted; and Gamp was still at his shoulder when they breasted the tape, and again a member of the Toledo Blades had won first place.

"We're done up!" groaned Hodge, while Bruce's broad face appeared to sober.

At that moment the notes of a fife, with the rattle and rub-a-dub-dub of drums floated across the field, and three queer figures came into view, each wearing on his hat a "stove-pipe" section of blue cardboard bearing a big white Yale Y.

They were marching abreast, and only a glance was needed to show that they were disguised. The fifer, a tall, lank fellow, capered his fingers rather awkwardly on the fife, though he contrived to get a tune out of it. He was the tallest of the three. The snare-drummer was of medium height, while the man who bore the big drum, pounding it in time and out of time and "in every old way," was almost as big and round and squat as his drum, though whether this effect was produced by stuffed clothing or was natural, no one could say. They were garbed like "jay" farmers, and each wore a red beard that defied penetration.

Merriwell stared.

"Some sort of a joke of the Toledo Blades!" grunted Bart.

"Some members of the Blades fixed up in that way to look funny!" said Carker, who was not pleased

with what he considered childish exhibitions. "Some fellows have queer ideas of humor."

The fifer was playing, or trying to play, that old, old fife piece, "We Are Marching Down to Old Quebec!" He made rather a mess of it; but no music from Sousa's band was ever received with more cheering or greater demonstrations of delight. The people simply stood up in the grand stand and howled.

"That bands the beat—beats the band!" gasped Ratleton.

"Git onto the jay wid the base-drum!" yelled one of the boys.

"Dat fifer must be Jack come down frum his bean-stalk!" yelled another.

"See de snare-drummer stumble wid his sticks!"

"Haow's the haying?" yelled Joe Gamp.

The fifer took the fife from his mouth, stared at Gamp, and, in a close imitation of Gamp's dialect, shouted back:

"The hayin's all right, b'gosh! an' so's this music!"

"Did you say Sousa's music?" demanded Bink.

"Young feller, don't git gay!" the leader threatened. Then turned to his men:

"Right ababout face. Lef foot forrud. Naow, march. Halt!"

The drums stopped, and so did the men, facing toward the grand stand, where handkerchiefs were fluttering and shouts of laughter were rising.

"Naow, all together. Give 'em a rip-roarin' one, b'gosh!"

A dozen dialects seemed to mingle in the cry:

"Hooraw for Frank Merriwell!"

"Don't fall mit dot trum on top of you!" shouted a good-natured German to the fat drummer.

"Ton'd you oben your mouth so vide dot id vill fall indo you!" was shot back in answer.

"Will yez git onto the luks av him!" yelled a big Irishman.

"If it's insultin' us ye are, Oi'll break the face av yez!" the snare-drummer yelled back. "Oi'm from the Ould Dart mesilf, and Oi won't shtand anny sass, begob!"

"Whoop!" squealed Bink. "This is the funniest circus I've seen in a month of Sundays!"

"The jay band from Jayville, come out to whoop things up for Merriwell!" screeched Danny. "Somebody pinch me, please, so that I can tell if I'm awake or dreaming."

The fifer put his fife to his lips and gave the key-note, and the three disguised, farmerish fellows began to sing, each in a separate dialect, at the same time moving their feet as if marching:

"We are marching down to old Quebec,
Where the drums are loudly beating;
The Americans have gained the day,
And the British are retreating."

But they did not sing it so plainly as that. The tall fifer started in alone:

"We are marching daown tew old Quebec,"

and was then drowned by the heavy voice of the fat base-drummer:

"Vere der trum vos loutly peating,
The Americans hov gained the day, b'gob,
And the British fale loike retrating."

Then the tall fifer yelled, crowded out and followed by the others:

"The wars are all o'er, b'gosh, an' we'll turn back
Vrom der blace vere virst ve sdarted,
We'll open up the string, begorra! an' choose a couple in,
To relase the poor broken-harrted."

The clumsy base-drummer was behind here, and bellowed, as he thumped his drum for emphasis:

"Shust to cheer ub dose vemales whose hearts vos vide-oben pu'sted."

"I should like to know the nationality of these guys," said Greg Carker, in a voice loud enough for them to hear.

"They were bred in old Kentucky!" chirped Bink Stubbs.

"You vos a liar!" shouted the base-drummer.

"If yez sass me, ye hatchet-faced lobster, Oi'll t'ump yez wid me dhrum-shticks!"

"We'll cut him daown fer hay while he's green, b'gosh!" said the fifer.

Frank Merriwell was broadly smiling.

"Take off your beards and show us who you are," urged Carker.

"Shed your hayseed and show us your hair!" shouted Danny.

The fifer began to sing, followed by the others in rather straggling order:

"We was bread in old Kentucky,
We wor butter in New Orlanes,
We vos vresh pork in Chicago,
In Boston we was baked beans!"

Here the fifer drew a long breath, and started in again, taking the first line as before, followed again by the snare-drummer with the next line, and he by the base-drummer with the next:

"We was codfish in Newfoundland,
In Kansas, b'gobs, we wor wh'ate!
But in efery bart uf der vorlt, you pet!
Merriwell never was beat!"

Everybody howled as the song concluded.

"Merriwell never was beat!" shouted the lank fifer. Then he turned to his men and swung his fife.

"Naow! Merriwell! Merriwell! Three cheers for Frank Merriwell!"

Then a thousand throats seemed to burst forth in one great shout for Merriwell.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE ASCOT BAND.

That shout was joined in not only by Frank's friends and admirers, and they were many in Toledo, but by a large number of people who did it to cheer the three queer Merriwell rooters.

Excited queries concerning their identity were flying round. Frank Merriwell was still broadly smiling.

"Dick the whoens—I mean who the dickens are they?" sputtered Rattleton.

"Well, that's what I should like to know myself!" grunted Bruce.

"They're for Merriwell, all right!" squealed Danny.

"Who do you think they are, Merry?" Carker inquired, the bored look having departed from his face.

"If that three-man band will only play for me when I run next time, it will give to my Mercury wings the speed of the wind!" chirped Ready. "Refuse me, but I must confess that I'm puzzled!"

Swiftwing stood with arms folded and impassive face. The people on the ground, in the grand stand, and in the bleachers, were hurling all sorts of questions at the three fellows who had made so strange an entrance upon the scene, and the three were shoot-

ing back replies that tended to set everybody in a good humor.

"Gug-gug-gug-goshfry! I nun-never sus-seen anything like it sense the time me and my brothers gug-got up the tin-pup-pup-pan band and charged the school-house!" stuttered Gamp. "That was sus-something of a sus-sus-sensation, naow, I tell you! I beat my old tin-pan till I pup-pup-pounded a hole through it. I was a thumper in them days, by chaowder! but I wan't nigh as fat as the feller with that big drum, you bet. A-haw! haw! a-haw! If you'd chop off his legs and his head you couldn't tell him frum his drum!"

"I believe Merry knows who they are!" declared Bart, who had been studying his friend's face. "Who are they, Merry?"

"Yes, I know, but I'll leave you to find out."

The officials of the contests were busying themselves, for the games had apparently come to an end, and now the announcement of the one-mile run was made.

Swiftwing and Gamp, Moonlight and Ralph Morris, the latter said to be a phenomenal runner in a mile race, were in this event. Those who were not ready dived for the dressing-rooms, to reappear shortly in racing-suits.

The betting-men and the citizens of Toledo, as well as the Toledo Blades, were sure that another victory

was to be added to those already won by the Blades, all pinning their faith on the splendid running-abilities of Morris and Moonlight. Morris was as tall and deep chested as Moonlight.

Swiftwing, however, was the favorite of a great many, particularly the ladies, perhaps because he was an Indian, and also because he was a veritable demigod in looks as he came out of the dressing-room and walked solemnly into position.

"Hooray fer the Merriwell b'ys!" shouted the snare-drummer, giving his drum-sticks such an elaborate flourish that he struck the fat base-drummer in the ear.

"Vot vos I ub to?" the latter howled, turning on the other with lifted stick.

"Shut up, ye Dutch chaze!"

"You shud ub my mouth!" the other cried, with a fierce flourish. "You vos always sdickin' my nose into your pusiness."

"If ye sass me, ye lobster, I'll woipe up the flure wid yez!"

"Kept away off from you!" shouted the other.

"Begorra! Oi'll break the face av yez, ye balony-sausage!"

The fat fellow shook his fist under the snare-drummer's nose.

"You vos a palony-sissage myseluf, und you couldt vhip me mit your hants tied!"

"Begosh, I'll birch ye both, if you don't carm

daown!" the lank fifer declared. "Hooray fer Frank Merriwell!"

The others forgot their quarrel instantly.

"Dot vos der stuffin's! Do heem ag'in! Whoop her up vor Vrankie Merriwell!"

"Oi'm howlin' f'r the Merriwell runners, you bet! They can bate the wurruld!"

Rattleton plucked at Merriwell's arm.

"Say!" he excitedly whispered.

The crowd was dividing its attention between these queer hayseeds, whose dialects were so different from their appearance, and the men who were getting ready for the mile run. It was great fun to behold the "farmers" quarreling at each other in the broken English of Germany, the brogue of Ireland, and the nasal twist of the New England backwoods.

"Git into line there and dew quit your fussin'!" the lank fifer commanded.

"Yaw!" exploded the fat drummer. "Gid me a line, und shut ub."

"Oi'll shut yez up wid a cr'rack on the jaw, d'ye moind, av yez don't quit hur'rlin' yer Dutch nonsinse at me, begobs!"

"Naow!" cried the leader. "All ready. The racers are goin' to start. Play 'em a tune to cheer' em. A lively one, b'gosh! Naow! All together!"

He put his fife to his lips and began to squeal out

"The Girl I Left Behind Me," as the pistol of the starter cracked, and the four runners leaped forward.

"Say!" Rattleton excitedly whispered, tugging at Merriwell's coat. "I know those fellows."

Merriwell laughed.

"You've caught on, have you, Rattles?"

"Who are they?" Bruce grunted.

"Tell him, Merry. I'm afraid even yet that I may be mistaken."

"Dunnerwust, Barney Mulloy, and Ephraim Gallup! I saw through their disguise as soon as they came on the grounds and began to talk."

"But it can't be!" protested Bart. "They're not in Toledo! How does it happen that they're in Toledo, if your guess is true?"

"My guess is true, though I don't know how they happen to be in Toledo. They are here, and, learning of our advent into the place and of this contest, they have planned this little business as a pleasant surprise."

"Hakes me want to go out and mug them—I mean it makes me want to go out and hug 'em!" beamed Rattleton. "Say, fellows, this is the jolliest go I ever heard of. I'm not dreaming, am I?"

The shriek of the fife and the eccentric rattle of the drums were enough to convince him that he was not dreaming.

The runners were moving along in full view of the

grand stand and bleachers in beautiful style, and the three "jays" were fifeing and thumping so loudly that they appeared to be resolved to make their "music" heard to the farthest end of the track.

"You're right, Merry!" Bart assented. "I don't know how I could have been so stupid. They're Mulloy, Dunnerwurst, and Gallup! The same old three!"

"But who could be expected to recognize them in those beards and with that outlandish clothing?" said Carker, who was not very familiar with the appearance of Gallup and Hans, and who had never before seen Barney.

"Regular jays from Jayville!" chirped Ready. "When I look at them I seem to smell the hay of far-off meadows."

The crowd was dividing its cheers between the "jay" band and the runners; though, more and more, attention was being turned toward the latter.

The race was seen to be a fine one. Moonlight and Swiftwing were in the lead, closely followed by Morris, with Gamp ten yards behind, as the quarter-mile was passed.

The track was almost circular and a half-mile long. As the runners came down on the second quarter-stretch, the fife squealed even more loudly and the din of the drums became deafening. Swiftwing was in the lead, though only a foot or so, and Gamp was crawling up on Morris.

Gamp continued to lessen the distance. Then Moonlight spurred in an effort to overtake and pass Swiftwing, and the crowd stood up in the seats and yelled. As the runners neared the grand stand, Gallup forgot to blow the fife and Hans forgot to thump the big drum.

"Git daown to business, Swiftwing!" Gallup yelled.

"You run-queek-mit-der-ving, gid a faster move on me!" Hans howled. "Shust t'ink dot you vos a mule mit an oats-pundle in vront uf mine nose! Dose vos der stuffin's! Gid me town to mine pusiness. Yaw! Go id! go id!"

In his excitement he seized the big drum-stick and joined Mulloy, who had steadily hammered away on his snare-drum, and Gallup, now recollecting himself, put the fife to his lips and again sought to send Swiftwing and Gamp on with "The Girl I Left Behind Me."

Moonlight was almost abreast of Swiftwing as they passed the half-mile, with Morris a close third, though crowded by Gamp. But Gamp continued to gain, running in long, easy lopes that somewhat resembled the Indian stride of Swiftwing, and at the three-quarters pole he passed Morris. Then Moonlight, having overexerted himself, dropped back into fourth place, and Gamp swung up beside Swiftwing on the third quarter, with Morris right at their heels.

From this on it was a fight for first place between

the Pueblo and the gaunt New Englander. The Indian lope of Swiftwing was wonderfully effective, but Gamp's strides were longer, and his gaunt legs moved like the piston-rods of an engine as he neared the end. He held his own with Swiftwing, whose running was something beautiful to see; then, with a spurt, he leaped past the Indian and beat him out two feet at the end.

The "three-man band" was filling the air with a din, but it was drowned in the wild shout that went up when Gamp and Swiftwing crossed the line. It had been a splendid race, and it was a splendid victory. The time was good, too! Four minutes and twenty-one seconds for Gamp.

The tide had turned. The coming of the eccentric trio of disguised friends had lifted the cloud that was shadowing the Athletic Team and rendering their efforts futile. Everybody felt it. Frank walked out to the "three-man band," as Ephraim put down his fife.

"That was handsomely done!" he said. "I don't know how you happen to be in Toledo, but you have done me and the fellows a good turn. We're going to win this series of contests now, without any doubt."

"Vrankie, my poy! You vas gladness to seen me!" shouted Hans, dropping the big drum-stick and clasp-
ing Merriwell's hand, though he did not remove his disguising beard, and his unfeigned pleasure made

him appear more comical than ever before. "You vos neffer so gladness in mine life!"

"B'gobs! We t'ought thot yez naded a mashcot, and we got together and kim over to be thot very thing fer yez!" shouted Mulloy, getting hold of the other hand. "Av anybody can holler louder fer yez than Barney Mulloy, Oi'll punch the villain's head for him, so Oi will!"

"B'gosh, we met together in this old taown by chance!" cried Gallup. "Some feller told us that you was daown here, and he thought you was going to fluke-up to-day; so we org'nized our band, and we come daown to help ye. By gum! I wa'n't afeared, though, that anything could do up yore fellers, Merriwell! 'Tain't in the blood of the fellers that trains with you ter be licked!"

"Hooray for Gamp!" Danny was yelling.

"Hooray for Swiftwing!" screeched Bink.

Then the crowd joined in and roared again.

CHAPTER XXIX.

MERRIWELL'S DASH.

The coming of the mascot band seemed to have been the one thing needed to put life into Merriwell's men; for Jack Ready almost immediately won the half-mile run in a contest with Broadbent, and Bart Hodge captured the 220-yards hurdles in a hot contest with Ralph Morris.

That the race might be made as interesting as possible from the point of view of the spectators, six men were entered for the 220-yards dash—Merriwell himself, with Joe Gamp and Swiftwing, representing the Athletic Team, and Carl Moonlight, Broadbent, and "Pepper" Benton the Toledo Blades.

The applause on their appearance from the dressing-rooms was pretty equally divided between Frank Merriwell and John Swiftwing, for both were almost perfect specimens of physical manhood. Swiftwing, in his light racing-suit, looked like a dark bronze statue, while Merriwell's perfectly formed limbs and arms were a beautiful pink. He appeared larger than when clad in ordinary clothing, and the sight of his well-proportioned yet massive muscles was a revelation as to what persistent and intelligent all-round training can do for a young man.

"He can't run with those spindle-legged fellows, though!" was the remark that went round.

"Ton'd you fool myself apoudt dot!" yelled Hans, who overheard it. "I vos a vlying-machines ven he geds me vound ub!"

The mascot band had been "lifting" the other runners over the ground with "Yankee Doodle" and "Marching Through Georgia." Now Gallup pushed the Yale "stove-pipe" to the back of his hat, pulled off the big red beard, and began to tune up with, "Here's to good old Yale, drink it down! drink it down!"

Hans Dunnerwust jerked off his red beard, and, after deliberately hunting for a safe pocket in which to stow it, solemnly tucked it away, then spat on his hands, and again took up the drum-stick. Mulloy gave his beard a fling into the air, with a whoop of joy at sight of Merriwell.

Danny began to sing:

"Balm of Gilead, Gilead,
'Way down on the Bingo Farm."

Then some Yale men in the grand stand broke out with the famous Yale cry:

"Brek key co ax coax coax
Brek key co ax coax coax
Wh-o-o-up who-o-up paraholoo Yale!"

What a contrast there was in the runners, as they

strained in position for the start! Merriwell, beautiful as Apollo; Swiftwing, looking like a bronzed god; Joe Gamp, tall, lank, awkward; Broadbent, with hatchet features, sunken chest, and spindle legs; Moonlight, yellow-maned and Teutonic, and "Pepper" Benton, lithe, muscular, and freckle-faced.

In spite of the wonderful running of Gamp and Swiftwing, those who fancied themselves judges of such things believed that the chances in this dash were all in favor of Moonlight and Broadbent. Moonlight was a wonderfully fast runner; and in a short dash, Broadbent, in spite of his appearance, was simply a phenomenon.

The starter's pistol cracked, and the runners leaped away, with Hans furiously pounding the big drum, Gallup blowing the fife with all his might, and the spectators yelling. Broadbent looked to be two feet ahead at the very beginning of the run, with the others abreast. Then the beautiful form of Merriwell pushed out into clearer view, passing the spindle-legged fellow.

Danny and Bink began to shriek and howl. Moonlight and Swiftwing drew abreast of Broadbent, closely followed by Gamp. Merriwell was already two yards in the lead. Swiftwing passed Moonlight, with Gamp at his heels.

Then Moonlight and Broadbent spurted, in a desperate effort to regain what they had lost. Moonlight

came up with Gamp, but the lank fellow again left him. Merriwell was ahead, with Swiftwing two yards behind him.

The people rose to their feet, with a babel of exclamations and cries. Rattleton tried to say something, and stuttered so in attempting to right a reversed sentence that he fairly choked himself red in the face. Bruce began to bellow like a fog-horn, and Bart smiled his grim satisfaction.

"Come home, Merry!" Bink screeched, throwing his hat on the ground and jumping on it. "Co-ome ho-ome!"

High over all sounded the furious pounding of the oase-drum and the shrill squeal of Gallup's fife.

Merriwell was coming home! He was now eight yards in the lead, and Swiftwing was behind him. Gamp was now close after Swiftwing, with Moonlight right at his heels, and Broadbent and Benton stringing along farther back.

Then the fife began to whistle, "See, the Conquering Hero Comes!"

Hans was not trying to keep time, nor did Mulloy appear to care for so small a matter. They were simply bent on making a deafening noise, and they were succeeding.

"Dose vos der stuffin's!" yelled Hans, as he furiously pounded away. "See my legs vly away mit heem! You vos a automobilier, und I ton'd vorget

myselluf vor a minute, you pet! Whoob! whoob! Vrankie, I vos a locomo-inchine mit a red vlag tied to your catcher-cow! Whoob! whoob! Come home to dem vot lofes you, Vrankie!"

Merriwell was nearing the tape. So fine a burst of speed had never been seen on the cinder-path of the Toledo Blades, and the excitement was intense.

He crossed the line, twelve yards ahead of his best competitor, John Swiftwing, with Gamp three yards behind the Pueblo. The Toledo Blade contestants were simply "not in it."

CHAPTER XXX.

FRANK MERRIWELL'S VAULT.

The greatest jumper of the Toledo Blades was the captain, Merret Palmer. In the running high-jump he had a record of five feet eight and a half inches. He was equally celebrated as a vaulter. It was believed by his friends that few could defeat him at pole-vaulting. None of the other members of the Toledo Blades could approach him in the high-jump and the pole-vault, and because Merriwell was said to be something of a wonder in both of these, Palmer was put against him.

The running high-jump came first. The queer mascot band had marched, playing, round the grounds in front of the grand stand immediately after Merriwell had won the 220-yards dash, to the delight and amusement of the vast crowd of spectators.

Now the "band" took position where the running high-jump was to be contested and "tuned up" for the purpose of cheering Merriwell.

"Uf Vrankie Merriwell ton'd peat heem, he will peat me myselluf!" Hans gravely shouted, as he took up the drum-stick.

"Shut up, ye Dutch chaze!" Barney commanded. "Yez couldn't git yure fut over a broom-shtick. The leddies do be afther laughing at yez! Oi'll be ashamed

of mesilf for being seen wid the loikes of sich as ye air!"

"Oh, you gone to grass!" Hans blurted. "You vos nod half so funny as I t'ink I vos!"

Merret Palmer was in position for the jump, and now started. He made a beautiful run, and easily cleared the bar. Merriwell did the same. Then the bar was lifted higher, and Palmer cleared it again. Merriwell followed in the same way.

Again the measurers elevated the bar.

"Merriwell will never go over that!" said Saulsbury.

"I'm afraid they've put it so high that Palmer can't go over it," said Gail.

Palmer carefully estimated the distance with his eye, then broke into a run. He made a beautiful leap, and it appeared that he would easily clear the bar. But the height was very high and deceptive. Palmer struck the bar and carried it away.

"Put it two inches higher!" said Frank.

The measurers looked questioningly at him.

"Just a bluff!" Gail whispered. "He knows he'll carry the bar away, too, and thinks he may as well have it two inches higher, and so give the appearance of having made a great jump! The thing is too thin, though."

Bart heard him and gave him a black look, but at once turned toward Frank. The mascot band was

shrieking and pounding away, but it seemed to redouble its effort as Merriwell started for the run. The noise, unmusical, yet produced by men who loved and adored him, seemed to give speed and lightness to his movements. Then he rose into the air with the lightness of a bird, and cleared the bar with the greatest apparent ease.

A wild shout went up from the spectators. The jump had been phenomenal. Gail was astounded and bewildered.

"I didn't think it possible!" he gasped.

"Which only shows that you don't know Merriwell!" Bart snapped.

The figures went up: "5 feet 11 1-4 inches."

While the "jay" band was still playing and the people shouting, big Bruce Browning walked into position for the hammer-throw, taking the hammer and stepping into the seven-foot ring. He looked like a young Hercules. Twice the heavy hammer was swung round, then it went over his shoulder in a mighty throw, which measured 150 feet 5 inches.

A big giant named Devan was his competitor in this event; but Devan's throw measured only 133 feet 9 inches—a good throw, but appearing to fall ridiculously short in comparison with the one made by Bruce.

After that Bruce defeated Devan easily in the shot-putting event; and Jack Ready and Joe Gamp took

the honors in the running broad jump. Everything in sight was now being taken by the Athletic Team. Then Merriwell and Palmer came forward to fight for the honor of the pole-vault. The mascot band "tuned up" again.

"Now you seen me go higher as der moon vot jumbed ofer der cow!" squawked Hans. "Petter you put a string to heem to bull me town again!"

"B'gosh! I'll put a string raound your neck to keep you from talking all the time an' fergittin' to paound that drum!" threatened Gallup. "I will, by chaowder!"

Bart and others were cheering the mascot band, and in consequence Hans was so pleased and excited that he thumped the atmosphere quite as much as he did the drum-head, and forgot entirely that in music there is such a thing as "time."

Palmer came first in the pole-vault. He made a pretty leap, and easily cleared the high bar. Merriwell duplicated the performance.

The bar was pushed far up. Palmer went over it again, but not with such ease, while Merriwell appeared to have no difficulty in passing cleverly over it. Again it went up, astonishingly high as it seemed. Palmer, however, appeared confident that he could clear it, though his friends, made anxious by his experience in the high-jump, were plainly nervous.

Palmer made a quick, confident run, planted his pole

firmly, and rose lightly; but the bar was too high for him, and he knocked it down instead of passing over it.

Merriwell stood for a moment surveying the distance with his eye, while the mascot band dinned and Hans squawked encouragingly. Then he made the same kind of a run, and passed over the bar with as much apparent ease as when it was lower. The Blades were amazed.

"Vot you tolt me?" squawked Hans, stopping his pounding for a moment and glaring round. "Vos der cow jumper ofer der moon petter as dot?"

"Put the bar six inches higher!" Merriwell commanded.

The measurers stared.

"Put it six inches higher!" he repeated.

"You seen me?" howled Hans, giving the big drum a terrible thump. "I vos going to peat dot, und yumb ofer der cow vot jumbed ofer der moon. Climb me ub in a tree und hold me dose pars higher yit a'ready! Gid oudt uf de away off, eferypoty! Now you seen me!"

The measurers put the bar six inches higher. The spectators were howling. They liked an exhibition of grit, though many began to fear that even Merriwell had cut out too hard a task for himself.

Hans and Barney "lifted" on the drums as Frank started, and Gallup gave the fife an extra squeak.

Merry passed over the short distance with the lightness of a bird, planted the pole in the ground a little space in front of the bar, and lightly lifted himself into the air. He went up, up, as if flying, swung himself gracefully over the high bar as he reached the perpendicular, letting go the pole at the same moment, and dropped to the ground on the other side as lightly as a feather.

There was a thunder of applause, while the measurers and the athletic members of the Toledo Blades who knew something about pole-vaulting were struck dumb. The height of Merriwell's great pole-vault was 11 feet 11½ inches. It was a record-breaker.

CHAPTER XXXI.

JACK READY'S PHOTOGRAPHS.

Jack Ready came into Merriwell's room that night in great excitement, holding in his hand a surprising camera picture for which he could not account.

The room was filled with Merriwell's friends, including Mulloy, Dunnerwust, and Gallup, who had been volubly explaining how, by the merest chance, they had stumbled upon each other in the city of Toledo and had then conceived the plan of visiting the grounds of the Toledo Blades in their "jay" disguise as a mascot band.

"By chaowder! It was the most sing'lar thing I ever knowed," Gallup declared. "The Dutchman bumped ag'in me right in the middle of the street; and as we was shakin' hands, Mulloy come along and jammed my hat daown on my head, and hollered 'Haow de do?' B'gosh, I 'most fainted. Never heard of anything so queer in all my born days!"

"Not half so queer as this!" chirped Ready. "I think I must have been taking pictures in my sleep—sort of walking round on the ozone in broad daylight and snapping my camera without knowing anything about it. I've got a picture here that I never took!"

He thrust it under Frank's nose. Merry stared at it for a moment, then fairly leaped from his chair.

"You see who the parties are?" he asked.

"Well, my cranium feels so queer since discovering that thing while I was developing my films that I can't trust my eyes to anything. But if I'm not dreaming—say, fellows, I'm not dreaming?"

Greg Carker pushed forward for a look at the picture.

"If I'm not dreaming, I should say that one of the fellows—the one who is being gently belted with the slung-shot—is Delancy Livingston!"

"It is Livingston!" exclaimed Carker. "Where did you get that?"

"Just now; a while ago, that is—while developing films. I can account for the other pictures, but not for that. I know I never snapped on that scene—unless I did it in my sleep!"

"Where were you when Delancy was knocked down? Were you out in the woods by the lake shore?"

Frank put the questions. Almost a dazed look came into Ready's face.

"Say!" he cried. Then stopped, as if the thought was impossible.

"Say!" he began again.

"Well, say it!" Hodge grumbled.

"I was out there with Carker, and we had our cameras; but I didn't think—why! it's possible, isn't it? I remember that, as we were going along a path, or toward a path, I stumbled and pushed my camera

button. I recollect now, too, that I said to Carker, 'There's a film gone!' or something like that. But the camera wasn't pointing at anything!"

"Where is the picture of the bushes and trees which you must have got when you pressed the button?" Carker queried. "That is, supposing that your camera was ready for taking a picture at the time?"

"The camera was ready. I thought something might hop out of the bushes and I held it ready, so that I could instantly press the button in case of need. There isn't any picture with bushes and things, except this one; and it shows this scene. Say! fellows, I must have snapped the scene when the trampish fellow was beating Delancy down with the slung-shot."

"Nothing else!" Frank declared. "That's the very fellow, and that's the very scene I looked on myself, though from a different point of view, when I leaped through the bushes to help Livingston."

"And got yourself into trouble by it!" snarled Hodge.

"It's all clear to me, since your explanation," Frank went on. "You had the camera pointed through an opening in the bushes upon that very scene at the moment you stumbled and pressed the button, and the camera faithfully recorded what it saw. You have a witness that no honorable court will go back on!"

Hodge stared, then uttered a war-whoop and leaped to his feet.

"A witness! Sure! And I never thought of it that way! What an idiot I am! Merry, you're all right!"

There were almost tears in the eyes of the honest fellow and true friend—for Merriwell had no truer friend than Bart Hodge. And Hodge had been troubled beyond measure by the evidence which was to be brought against Frank in the trial, which was fixed for an early day. He had talked the matter over, without Frank's knowledge, with the members of the Athletic Team, with those who could be trusted as friends in the Toledo Blades, and with some of the best lawyers in Toledo; and none of them could make him feel that Merriwell was not in imminent peril of imprisonment and ignominious disgrace, even though innocent.

He saw now that the picture which Ready had unknowingly taken in the grounds at Granada Heights, by the lake shore, was the one thing needed to clear Frank of the faintest suspicion of guilt. This picture, added to the abundant proof of Frank's stainless reputation hitherto, would be enough to convince any unprejudiced judge and secure Merriwell's release.

Bart was dancing about the room like a wild man. Carker took the picture and passed it round for inspection.

"Where's my fife?" yelled Ephraim.

He leaped up also.

"Und my trum vos creebed away by myselluf!" squawked Hans. "Vere vos does trums?"

"From the looks of you, I think you must have eaten yours for supper!" chirped Bink Stubbs.

"Shut ub my mouth!" Hans howled, glaring at the little joker. "Uf you ead so much as myselluf you vouldt pe pigger as two moons. Who tolt you so much alretty yet righdt away queek? You see dot?" shaking his fist under Bink's nose. "You vill hit me, uf you talk so much sassiness to yourselluf. I ton'd stant no such voolishness from me or anypotty!"

"B'gorra! I bel'ave I'll put the two hands av me on the little dhrum!" Mulloy exclaimed, likewise scrambling up. Then the three dived into the hall, and, returning in a few moments with the fife and drums, began a furious pounding and fifeing that was enough to raise every guest in the hotel.

Gallup straggled in the first notes, as if in uncertainty, then swung into "We Won't Go Home Till Morning!"

In another minute pandemonium had broken loose. Not until then did Frank realize how much all these friends had been worried about the serious charge which had been brought against him and which was to be pressed by some of the strongest legal talent of Toledo, employed by the money of Hammerswell and Delancy Livingston. Confident in the purity of his in-

tentions and in his innocence, he had not felt the situation to be so grave; but these friends had felt it.

"I see now why you fellows were so blue at the beginning of the contests with the Blades," he said, taking Bart's hand in a warm clasp. "You couldn't win anything, because you were weighted down with a great fear."

"You're right, old man!" Hodge shouted. "And if something hadn't happened to lift us out of that Slough of Despond the Blades would have won as sure as fate!"

"And the thing that happened was the coming of the mascot band! Let the honest fellows drum and tear around, I'm glad to have such friends."

Never had there been such an exhibition of the great fold which Frank Merriwell had on the affections of his friends. Thought of his danger had taken the strength and cleverness from their athletic frames and the courage out of their hearts.

"What's the matter?" the landlord demanded, poking his head through the doorway.

"Celebrating the release of a captive!" drawled Browning, as he lighted a match and thrust it against the tobacco in the bowl of his pipe. "This is the year of jubilee!"

The landlord smiled, but went away mystified. He

knew, however, the next day, when Merriwell was given an honorable release by the judge of the court; for the mascot musicians lined up in front of the hotel and Merriwell's friends gave Ready and the "jay" band "three cheers and a tiger!"

CHAPTER XXXII.

IN PURSUIT OF MADISON JONES.

"The very man!"

Merriwell laid a hand on the shoulder of Bart Hodge and drew him half-round, that he might see a roughly dressed fellow who had walked out of a drinking-place on one of the principal streets of Chicago. The man's face and hands were grimy, and his coal-stained soft hat was drawn well over his eyes. Hodge stared.

"Don't you recognize him?" Frank asked. "That's the chap who downed Delancy Livingston with the slung-shot."

"Sure! The same fellow! But I should not have recognized him, for I saw only his photograph, you know. What are you going to do?"

"Follow him. Come on!"

The man left the crowded and well-lighted thoroughfare for a side street, and walked shamblingly on, with hat still drawn over his eyes as if he desired to escape close observation, and Merriwell and Hodge, turning into the same street, hastened after him. That grimy face had brought back vividly to Merriwell a sight he had beheld in the wooded grounds at Granada Heights, near Toledo, a few days before.

Jones had escaped, and Frank now saw him for the first time since the assault.

"No man who carries a little money about with him is safe while that miscreant is out of jail," was Frank's thought, as he and Bart walked along the narrow street after "Mad Jones," as the fellow was often called by his acquaintances. "The thing for me to do is to point him out to the first officer we meet and cause his arrest. Delancy won't thank me for it; but I'm not trying to do things to please him."

"We'll keep well back, so that he won't observe us," he said, aloud, as calmly as if speaking on any ordinary subject. "I don't want him to get away from me here, as he did at Granada Heights."

"All right, Merry! I wouldn't do anything to please Delancy, though, if I were you!"

"This won't please Delancy. It will simply break him and Hammerswell all up if I can lay hands on that fellow and force a confession from him. They're still claiming that I am really the chap who used the slung-shot on Delancy and tried to rob him, in spite of the evidence of the picture and the fact that I was given an honorable discharge by the judge. They say that the judge was an old fool and that the picture was manufactured for the purpose."

"Oh, I know all about it!" was Hodge's hot rejoinder. "I had the pleasure of thumping Hammerswell a few for what he did, and I'm just waiting for an excuse to get a crack at Delancy. I'm not through

with those fellows. I wonder if they have followed us to Chicago?"

"If they have, they're keeping shady."

The picture mentioned was one taken by an accidental snap-shot of Jack Ready's camera. It showed Madison Jones striking Delancy Livingston down with a slung-shot, and its worth as evidence had been strong enough to secure Merriwell's immediate release from custody.

Mad Jones turned from the narrow street into a narrower one, which was little more than an alley. As he made this change he stopped for a moment and glanced back. Frank and Bart had stopped, and seemed to be looking into the windows of a cheap shop at the moment. But the eyes of Madison Jones were keen.

"Spotted!" he growled. "That devil of a Merriwell is on my trail! And he's as keen as a hound. What am I to do?"

He seemed about to turn round and boldly try to make his way back to the main thoroughfare. His eyes shone evilly and his fingers twitched, while into his face there came a dangerous light.

"If they follow me it'll be the worse for them!" he grated. "What's it any of their business? Merriwell got out of the thing safely, and I jumped to Chicago. I got no swag, anyway, and I won't be nabbed for it.

"They'll run up against something worse than the slung-shot, if they try to chase me down."

Then he dived into the alley.

"Come!" Frank whispered, and bounded with light steps to the entrance, arriving in time to see Jones whisk into a doorway and disappear.

"He's gone into that house!" Bart panted.

"And will go out at another entrance."

There was only an instant of indecision; then Merriwell, with Hodge at his heels, passed through the same doorway. They found a flight of stairs before them, up which they passed, quickly but warily, and came out on a landing; then climbed up a second flight to a similar landing.

"There are only two ways out of this place," said Frank, glancing round. "One leads down into the house and the other, I think, goes up to the roof."

"Which way did he go?"

The excitement of the chase was giving color to Hodge's dark cheeks and brightening his eyes.

"To the roof, I think. Probably he believes that we did not see him enter that doorway, and that we will think he passed on through the alley."

"He must know this place?"

"Yes, likely. I wish we had an officer."

"If we come on him there will be a fight, Merry! And we'll find him ready for us. These fellows carry weapons with them as a rule."

"We'll have to keep our eyes open. Shall we follow him to the roof?"

"Just as you say. I'm with you!"

Hodge was always ready to back Frank in any undertaking, no matter how dangerous.

"I'm afraid he has given us the slip," Frank whispered, closely scanning the stairway that he believed led to the roof. A dim lamp burned in the hall.

"I don't like this way of entering a house without permission," he continued. "I think we'd better go back for an officer."

"And let him get away?"

"We ought to have an officer, or some authority. I really think the fellow is hiding on the roof, secure in the belief that we have been thrown off the scent. He must have seen us at that corner!"

Frank was not wasting time in words, but began to descend the stairway.

When they reached the alley, he hurried Bart to the street for an officer, and was pleased to see him return almost instantly with a blue-coated policeman.

"A regular thug on the roof, do yez mane to say?" the cop questioned, fingering his club. "Thin Sullivan's the b'y fer yez. Oi've been watchin' this house, yis; an' it's a thave's nest, d'ye moind! Phat moight be the name av him?"

"Madison Jones, or Mad Jones," was Hodge's eager answer.

"Oi t'ink Oi've heard av him, an' a tearin' divil he is; but Sullivan is the b'y fer him. The chafe gev me the names av fellys that air fraquinters av the place, and av me mimory sarves me this is one av thim. Mad, is he? Oi'll make him madder than a dog wid the hoidrophobye whin Oi play a chune on his skull wid me club."

It was plain that Sullivan was anxious to distinguish himself in the eyes of his superiors by making a valuable arrest, and that he could be depended on to put up a big fight if Jones should be encountered.

Merriwell and Hodge reentered the house with the policeman, and the three made their way to the upper landing, where Sullivan halted in indecision.

"Oi sh'u'd say that he's more loikely to be down there, than an the roof," he declared, pointing with his club to the other stairway. "Oi'll inspict the place."

Clutching the club, he hastened down the flight, while Hodge at Frank's direction, mounted to take a look over the roof. Merriwell remained on the landing for the purpose of stopping Jones if he made a dash by either of the others.

"I'm afraid he has found his way to the street," was Frank's thought. "But we'll know in a minute, unless he has some hiding-place in which he can safely secrete himself. From what Sullivan said, this place must be a sort of headquarters for thieves and suspicious characters. Well, it looks it!"

At that moment there came sounds of a struggle from the roof.

"Hodge has found him!" was his exclamation, as he leaped for the stairway.

Not seeing anything suspicious in the casual survey he was able to give from the top of the stairway, Bart had crawled out on the flat roof for the purpose of thoroughly satisfying himself that no one was there. At one side there was a sheer drop of many feet to the pavement. On the other side there seemed to be a similar drop, either into a courtyard or to the roof of a lower building.

Though the night was hot, the breeze from the lake made the roof pleasantly cool. There was very little haze in the sky, and, in spite of the smoky atmosphere, the stars looked big and bright. Bart might have been able to fancy himself back in the Adirondacks, or at Granada Heights on the shore of Lake Erie, but for the incessant roar that came to him from the streets.

"There doesn't seem to be much of a place for a fellow to hide up here," was his thought, as he slowly advanced, carefully noting every object. "I'll have my trouble for my pains! Likely the rascal gave us the slip when we went down to look for a cop."

The roof was poorly lighted, for it was above the electric lamps, and in consequence there were black shadows here and there. Keen, burning eyes were

watching Hodge from one of these. They were the eyes of Madison Jones.

"Thought I gave 'em the dodge!" he gritted. "But I won't be taken. I'll fling the fellow into the street if he tries to lay his hands on me!"

From his position he could see Hodge plainly.

"Just a boy! I wonder if he reckons that I'll go along with him if he asks me to? Not much!"

He drew himself closer against the dark wall at his back and put down his hand as if searching for a weapon. Hodge walked straight on toward the wall. He saw the shadow, but he did not see the form, and he fancied no one was there. He reached one end of the wall, in his circuit of the roof, and began to pass along the shadowed area.

Madison Jones stiffened his muscles for a struggle. He believed that the youth saw him and intended to make a near approach and then suddenly pounce on him, thus taking him at a disadvantage.

He did not intend to be beaten down in that way; so, when Hodge was within a yard of him, he sprang up with a snarl like that of a tiger. In another moment Bart was struggling for his life—struggling with a man who was his superior in strength and whose strength seemed to be doubled by the fear that now gripped him.

"I'll throw you into the street!" Jones hissed. "I'll teach you to attend to your own affairs."

Then his sinewy fingers sought for Hodge's throat, and one of his heavy fists was driven at the youth's head. But if Bart was not so strong as his assailant, he was far more active, and was, besides, a clever wrestler and skilled in the art of self-defense.

He dodged the blow aimed at his head and writhed away from the clutching fingers. Then his heavy right fist shot out with telling effect, landing in the man's face. Jones staggered backward, but did not fall, and came at Bart again with the roar of a mad bull. That blow had deeply enraged him and made him an even more dangerous foe.

Again and again Bart's fists shot out with punishing effect. But Madison Jones could take punishment like an ox. Finding he could not evade the rain of blows, he put down his head and came again at Bart with a furious rush.

Bart's heavy right struck him full on the head, but Jones came on as if his head were merely an iron battering-ram. As he came he flung out his strong arms; and, fairly beating down Bart's hands by mere muscular strength and endurance, he caught him round the waist and lifted him from his feet.

The horrible face, grimy and bleeding, was thrust almost against Bart's, and the arms held down Bart's right hand as if they were bands of welded iron. The aroused ruffian had a giant's strength. A cry was heard at that moment, as Merriwell reached the roof,

and, dimly seeing the struggle that was taking place, rushed toward the combatants.

"I'll kill ye!" Jones grated, transformed by his blind anger into a madman. As he said it, he rushed across the roof, thinking he was bearing Hodge toward the street, into which he meant to hurl him.

Instead, his blind rush carried him toward the other side, where there was a sheer drop into the darkness to another roof.

Jones saw that he was not at the street side of the roof, but he felt that this served as well. Merriwell was coming with quick leaps across the flat roof.

"I'll kill ye!" Jones snarled again, and, lifting Bart in his strong arms, he hurled him into space.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

AN EMPTY BIRD'S NEST.

A chill of fear struck through Frank Merriwell when he saw the villain hurl Hodge from the roof, for it seemed to him that his friend was going to his death. Then he leaped at Jones.

For a brief instant the latter reeled on the edge of the roof. Frank expected an encounter. Instead of meeting him, however, Jones gave a quick turn and leaped into the darkness whither he had hurled Hodge. As he left the roof there was a loud crash of breaking glass; then Jones disappeared, and a moment later Frank heard him fall heavily.

Merriwell listened, straining his eyes into the gloom. He heard a movement below, as if some one were scrambling or crawling along.

"Hodge!" he called, his voice thrilled with anxiety. "Hodge! Are you hurt, Hodge?"

The crawling movement continued, as if some animal were writhing in pain. Frank's feelings were indescribable. He wanted to leap from the roof himself, that he might assist his friend.

In wild anxiety, he threw himself on his knees and began to feel along the edge. His hands came in contact with what seemed to be a spout or piece of guttering. Without a moment's hesitation he drew

out his handkerchief, and, slipping over the rim of the roof, took hold of the spout with both hands, after first wrapping them in the handkerchief, and slid downward. He knew that a roof was below, and he intended to let himself fall the remaining distance, if the spout ended suddenly. But it continued all the way down, and his feet struck the lower roof with a thud.

His hands were torn and bleeding in spite of the protection afforded by the handkerchief, but he was scarcely aware of it. As soon as his feet touched the roof he turned and leaped in the direction of the sound.

"Hodge!" he called; but there was an ominous silence. The scraping sound had ended.

He brought himself to an abrupt halt on the edge of a black-looking space, and bending forward touched a broken and ragged skylight. Then he recalled the noise of breaking glass. Perhaps Hodge had gone through the skylight. That crashing of glass had come at the instant of Jones' leap. It must have been made by Hodge smashing downward through this place.

Merriwell leaned over in a fever of anxiety. What had become of Hodge—of the friend who was more to him than a brother? He felt a twinge of self-accusation, for it was through him that Bart had been led into this awful peril.

"Hodge!" he called.

The dull roar of the streets alone came back in answer.

"Hodge!" he shouted again.

There was a stir below.

"Is that you, Hodge? For mercy sake, speak!"

"Y-yes!" came back feebly in answer.

"Are you hurt? Where are you?"

"I think not much hurt, Mer-Merriwell! I don't—don't know where I am!"

It scarcely seemed Bart's voice.

It came again, and now appeared to be stronger. Evidently Hodge was dazed.

"Can you tell me what sort of a place you are in?" Frank asked, stretching himself over the broken skylight and trying to look down on his friend. There was a moment of hesitation. Hodge seemed to be fumbling about and still dazed.

Madison Jones had evidently escaped from the roof, or was hiding somewhere upon it; but Merriwell was too much disquieted about Hodge to wish to pay any further attention then to the ruffian.

"Will it be safe for me to try to jump down there?" he asked.

In reply, there was the scratching of a match. When the light flared up it revealed Bart Hodge, half-crouching, half-lying, on the floor of the room below, beside a lounge, holding up the match. Then Hodge

glanced upward and was able to see Merriwell stretched over the skylight between himself and the sky.

Merriwell's quick glance caught the possibility of the situation. The distance from the skylight to the floor where Bart lay was not great. He half-rose for a leap, then jumped for the lounge. The air set in motion by the swift descent of his body put out the match, and he landed with a heavy "plunk" in the middle of the lounge, which threw him back as if he were a bounding ball.

"Hurt, Merriwell?" was Bart's anxious inquiry. "What made you?"

Then another match was scratched, and by its light Frank found himself on the floor within a yard of Hodge, somewhat jarred but not in the least injured.

Scrambling up, he took the blazing match from Hodge's shaking fingers and applied it to the gas-jet above their heads. There was a flash, and the room was brilliantly illuminated. The floor was covered with pieces of broken glass. The place was scantily furnished, and the furniture was old and worn. Near the center was a round card-table covered with green cloth.

"I'm all right!" was Frank's answer, as he threw down the match. "How are you feeling, old fellow? You had a dreadful fall. Any bones broken?"

Bart had fallen through the skylight squarely upon

the lounge. He was slightly cut and scratched by the glass, and the fall had rendered him unconscious. He had, up to this moment, been somewhat dazed. But his faculties were clearing. He understood the situation now, and he staggered to his feet.

"Sound as a top!" was his grim declaration, as he began to feel of himself tenderly. "That lounge saved my bacon, I guess. What became of Jones? And the cop?"

Merriwell saw him wince with pain as he moved his right arm.

"Your arm is hurt!"

"Not a bit of it, Merry. Just jammed a little. From the feeling, I fancy I must have landed on my shoulder. But I'll be all right and able to catch in that game to-morrow afternoon against the Chicagos."

Frank looked grave.

"Let me see it," he said, walking up to Bart and taking hold of the arm and shoulder, which he began to move.

Hodge pressed his jaws together, but no cry of pain came.

"Your shoulder is hurt!"

"Just a little!" Hodge insisted. "I'll be able to catch all right! Don't worry about it. Has Jones got out of the building? Or is this the same building? He threw me from the roof. I know that. I went down, to be smashed to pieces, as I felt sure; but

struck the skylight and tore it into giblets, then landed here. Say, Merry, there will be a big bill to pay for that skylight! Where are the owners of this place?"

"I think they'll not trouble us. It looks to be some sort of a cheap gambling-den. They have probably been frightened away temporarily by the police. Sullivan said, you'll remember, that he had been detailed to watch the place."

"Where is he?"

"I don't know. Jones jumped to the roof, after you. I heard him crawling, and I think he must have been hurt. It is probable he has escaped us."

He turned to look for a way out of the room. There were two doors, both opening on stairways.

"The fellows who haunted this place wanted a way to get out easily," was his comment.

"Hello!" cried Bart. "Here is an electric button."

"Perhaps it will summon the janitor," Merriwell suggested, and pressed it.

They waited, but there was no answer to the summons, and it began to seem that the house was entirely deserted.

"The police are watching an empty nest, for the birds are flown."

Then he turned to one of the stairways and was followed by Bart, after turning off the gas. The stairway was dark, but they guided themselves down it by

lighted matches, and finally found a bolted door. When the bolt was shot back and the door opened, they were on steps leading into a sort of courtyard.

"Be the faix av me! Phere hov yez been?"

It was the voice of Sullivan.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

FRANK DISAPPEARS.

Sullivan was panting and perspiring, for the houses and courtyard were very hot, and he had been wildly rushing from point to point, hearing strange noises and crashing glass, but without understanding what it meant or being able to discover anything.

"You haven't seen Jones?" Frank asked.

"Oi hovn't seen annything, but Oi've hearrd the old divvil himself sthompin' wid his hoofs and 'atin' the windy glass."

Frank laughed at the drollery of the Irish policeman. After explaining to Sullivan what had occurred, they ascended to the roof, upon which was the broken skylight, and searched with him for some traces of Madison Jones.

"He must have gone down this fire-escape," was Merriwell's conclusion. "But he may not have gone to the street, and may be still in the house."

Sullivan turned the light of his lantern on the fire-escape. It passed a window ledge below, and Bart was about to swing himself over and descend to this window. He drew back, however, with a wince of pain.

"Your shoulder hurts you?" Frank questioned.

"It seems to be out of gear a little. But I don't

think it amounts to anything. I mustn't risk laming it, that's all, for I've got to catch in that game to-morrow."

"We'll go back by the way of the stairs, then. I fancy the fellow wasn't so much hurt as that crawling noise made me think, and that he has escaped from the house. He could easily have gone down to the street from here. We'll look through the lower story."

The lower story yielded no better results. Sullivan was greatly disappointed. He had been feeling recently that his tenure of office was not very secure, and he hoped that the capture of some well-known criminal would reinstate him in the good opinions of his captain.

"Oi don't want to gev up the sairch," he said, running his eyes over the rooms and corridors, as he passed from point to point with his lantern.

On leaving the house they entered a little alley, and the policeman hastened round to his station in front. He was scarcely gone when Frank, who was standing in the shadows with Bart, saw Madison Jones come out of the house they had left and stand staring about in the lower doorway. He stood there for only a moment, then started down the alley, moving from them.

"Call the cop again," Frank whispered. "I'll try to see where the fellow is going."

He kept along in the shadow, as Bart hurried away for Sullivan, and saw Jones dive quickly up another

stairway on the farther side of the alley. Merriwell walked to this stairway and peered up cautiously. It was as dark as the one from which he had recently emerged.

Hoping to ascertain what had become of Jones, he crept softly to the top of the stairs and then along a dark hall. There were bits of plastering on the floor, indicating that the place was being repainted. Jones had stopped in the hall, perhaps to discover if he was again pursued. They saw each other at the same moment.

"Halt!" Merriwell commanded. "Do not let him get out the other way, my men!"

Then he made use of one of his familiar ventriloquial tricks.

"We've got the way guarded here!" seemed to come in another voice.

Jones fancied it came from some point beyond the hall. He faced toward Merriwell, as if bewildered, then jumped violently backward and whisked out of sight in the gloom. Frank hurried along the hall after him. Then his feet trod on nothing but air, and he shot downward into blackness and space.

When Bart Hodge gained the alley with Sullivan, both running, neither Merriwell nor Jones was to be seen. The alley was deserted. They hastened on through it, looking about as they went, and came out on another street.

"I don't see what's become of them!" said Hodge. "Seems to me Merry wouldn't have left the alley without telling us where he was going. Perhaps the chap ran into one of the houses and Merry chased in after him?"

They returned to the alley and made a search. Sullivan crept to the top of the stairway which Frank had ascended, but made no farther search, as his light revealed nothing more suspicious than a half-torn-up hall, liberally sprinkled with pieces of plastering. For more than an hour the search was kept up in the alley and the houses grouped along it. But Merriwell could not be found. He had simply vanished.

CHAPTER XXXV.

A SOLEMN COMPANY.

Merriwell, on behalf of the Athletic Team, had challenged the regular Chicago baseball-team, learning that the Chicagos had a day in the Windy City in which no game was scheduled for them; and the challenge had been accepted.

The Chicago National Leaguers might have ignored this challenge but for the fact that the newspapers had made the whole country familiar with the story of the defeat of the Torontos by Merriwell's men at Niagara Falls. "Merriwell's Wonders," the Athletic Team had been called by the press because of their wonderful work in that game, and the Chicagos were therefore ready to pay respectful attention to a challenge from Captain Merriwell.

The Chicago dailies were already filled with gossip about the great game that was now scheduled, and the baseball-cranks were more than ordinarily interested. It had been arranged that the winning team was to take the whole of the gate receipts, and as there was every indication that an enormously large crowd would turn out to witness the game if the weather should be at all favorable, the capture of the gate receipts would be worth a big struggle, to say nothing of the glory of defeating the "Chicago Colts."

But Merriwell had mysteriously dropped out of sight, and Hodge's shoulder was troubling him so that it seemed doubtful if he could catch even if Merry were in the pitcher's box and ready for the game. Therefore, it was a gloomy lot of fellows who gathered in Browning's room at the Palmer House to discuss the situation.

"I don't care anything about the game," Hodge groaned, as he felt of his lame shoulder and scowled. "If we only knew what has become of Merry! That's the only thing I'm interested in now. We can let the old game go, but we've got to find out what has become of Merry."

It seemed that this would be a very hard thing to do, though, for the city had been searched and was being searched as with a fine-tooth comb, without result. Police and detectives were everywhere looking for Frank Merriwell and Madison Jones. But from the moment Bart beheld them last in the little alley neither had been seen. Hence Bart but expressed the feeling of every member of the team when he declared that they could "let the old game go," but that Merriwell must be found.

"He'll turn up all right!" Rattleton insisted optimistically. "I don't doubt that he's still chasing thatascal. And he'll get him, too!"

"But why doesn't he send us some sort of word?"

demanded Bruce, who, though he smoked his pipe and tried to appear placid, was as nervous as Hodge. "That's what I'd like to know. It isn't his way to step out in a critical time and send us no sort of word. He must know that we are anxious about him."

"If he is living!" said Carker, voicing a thought that had been kept in the background. "It begins to seem to me that something so serious may have happened to him that he can never come back. He may be dead!"

"Shut up!" growled Hodge, while his face grew pale. "Stop talking that sort of rot. Of course, he isn't dead!"

Merriwell dead!

It was a thought to chill the blood in the veins of these faithful friends and adherents.

Danny and Bink had long ago forgotten to joke, and now looked as solemn as a pair of pigmy undertakers. Ready now and then tried an airy flight of words, but they were so poorly received, and he really felt so distressed, that he had given up these attempts. Gamp, big and awkward, but with a heart of gold, was ready to blubber like a schoolboy, but manfully choked down his feelings and continued to hope for good news.

Swiftwing alone, always solemn and sphinx-faced,

appeared not to have changed his demeanor. He sat now staring silently out of the window without seeing the throngs in the street, but what his thoughts were no one could guess. Thus the Athletic Team sat through the morning on the day scheduled for the game, interrupted now and then by the entrance of a messenger with a telegram for Hodge from some police-station or detective.

At each such interruption the members of the team, including Swiftwing, would gather eagerly round Bart to see the telegram, in the hope that something of importance had been discovered; and at each time they would be disappointed.

"These detectives and police officers are like a lot of moles!" Hodge grumbled, when the morning was well gone and one of these disappointing messages had been received and excitedly read. "And I've always heard that the Chicago police were pretty good."

"Men have disappeared in great cities and never been heard of again, in spite of everything the police could do," was the pessimistic statement of Greg Carker. "The police are not omnipotent. If Merriwell's body should be in the lake or——"

"Will you shut up?" Bart growled. "If you go at that again, I'll have to smash you!"

"Why, it's so!"

"Shut up! If old Job had had such a comforter as you he would have committed suicide."

"What shall we say to the Chicagos?" Danny inquired dolefully.

"Just tell them the truth," said Bruce. "Merriwell has disappeared and we can't play."

"But Swiftwing can pitch," Bink suggested.

Swiftwing did not stir, though he heard the words.

"But we would be knocked out, anyway!" Hodge grumbled. "My shoulder is done up. And if it were as fine as silk, I couldn't do anything with Merry gone in this way. This takes all the heart out of me. I don't want to play."

"Do you think I could hold down first bag with Merry's fate unknown?" Bruce growled, giving Bink a withering look. "You little runt, you haven't the feeling of a rat!"

Bink's face became more solemn than ever.

"I was just thinking," he apologized, "that even if Merry were dead——"

"He isn't!" Bart blurted out.

"Of course he isn't! But if he were, I'm pretty sure that he would want us to go right ahead and win this game."

"You're right," Bruce assented. "He would want us to do all of that"

"And we would like to do what he'd want us to do!" Bink continued.

The pitiful tone touched Hodge.

"You're right," he admitted, giving the little fellow a look of sympathy. "I beg your pardon for what I said."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE SCHEME OF SANFORD HAMP.

A serious-looking man, wearing a high silk hat and black clothing, who occupied the room next to that in which the solemn group sat throughout the morning, paced for a long time up and down the hall, getting a peep at Merriwell's friends as he passed the half-open doorway. The conversation within the room was not carried on in subdued tones, for there was nothing in the distressing circumstances surrounding them that Merry's friends were trying to conceal.

This solemn-looking man might have been taken for a minister, but that his nose blossomed too redly. He swung a light cane, and now and then stopped and stared at the floor and walls in apparent fits of abstraction, while he eagerly drank in all the details of the story of Merriwell's disappearance and the condition of Hodge's shoulder.

When he was sure he had the whole story under his hat, he walked softly away, and, going to Merriwell's door, whose number he had gained from a glance at the hotel-register, he deftly fitted a key and let himself into Frank's room.

"Just the thing!" he muttered, taking from a table a letter which Frank had written but had not mailed.

Then he softly retreated, locked the door, and slipped away to his own room. There he put the pilfered letter on a writing-desk, traced the characters over carefully with a pencillike stick, and slowly wrote a letter in imitation of Merriwell's handwriting.

"It's all right," he smilingly whispered, as he studied it over and compared the writing with Frank's. "When Sanford Hamp gets left, the iceman can go out of business!"

Putting the letters in his pocket, he went downstairs, passing the hotel telegraph-office, and going to another telegraph-office wrote and sent this message:

"LEE METCALF, Galesburg, Illinois.

"Wire this to Bart Hodge, Palmer House, Chicago: 'Tracked Jones here. Have sent catcher to take your place. Use him and win. Return after game. All right. Merriwell.'
CHUCK."

After wiring this he called a cab, driving to a cheap hotel off Dearborn, where he sent a messenger boy out with a note. The boy soon returned, accompanied by a man who looked to be a genuine tramp.

"I've work cut out for you, Walker," was Hamp's greeting, when he and the tramp were alone together. "I've got a scheme by which you are to catch for Frank Merriwell's team this afternoon in the game against Chicago. Their catcher has lamed his shoulder, and I

262 The Scheme of Sanford Hamp.

want you to go in, and, while pretending to catch for all you're worth, throw the game and defeat them. You're just the man to do it."

The tramp stared.

"There's a hundred dollars in it for you, if you follow my instructions."

The tramp's eyes lighted.

"How much now?"

"Not a red cent, for you'd get drunk and the whole plan would be in the soup. But you know me, and you know that my word is good."

Walker sank disappointedly back into the chair.

"What's your plan? How are you goin' to get me onto the team?"

"It's ten in your pocket, even if I fail in that. But I don't think I'll fail. Sanford Hamp doesn't fall down often, you know. I'm going to send you to the Palmer House, where the Merriwell men are stopping, with this note from their captain."

He took out the note he had written in his room and gave it into the tramp's dirty fingers.

"You'll see that it's signed by their captain and manager."

The tramp winked knowingly. Hamp took out his watch.

"You'll wait here half an hour before you go. By

that time they will have received a telegram from Captain Merriwell from Galesburg, telling them that he has arranged for you to catch in place of Hodge, whose shoulder is lame. They're the sort to do whatever this fellow Merriwell says."

"It don't look reasonable that they'll put me behind the bat, though!" giving his tattered clothing a glance. "Tramps ain't goin' round catching for famous ball-teams."

"It will go with these fellows, if their captain says so. I've been listening to them all the morning and have got the inside of the whole thing. The captain has dropped out of sight, somehow; they don't know how, and I don't. But my guess is that he's been done up by thugs or knock-out drops, or something of the sort, and that his body will be found in the lake, or in the river, or in some hole by and by. From their talk, I'm sure if he is on top of ground he would have let them know before this. He'll not come back. In the meantime, we can work this little racket."

"What's your interest?" the tramp asked, winking a swollen eye.

"Well, I don't care to say how much, but it's enough to make me willing to hand over to you the hundred all right if you throw the game. I've got some bets up on Chicago. I think they are safe. But the way

264 The Scheme of Sanford Hamp.

things have turned round, the game will not be played, the bets will be called off, and I'll lose the winnings. See? If the game is played and the Merriwells are beaten, I'm ahead by a good deal. Throw the game, and the hundred is yours as soon as the trick is done, without a word."

"Couldn't you make it more'n a hundred?"

Hamp frowned.

"Don't become covetous, Walker! I've put greenbacks into your hands before, and will do it again, if we can pull together. But you must let me make the plans and name the figures. Haven't I always paid you all your jobs are worth?"

"Oh, I'm your man! If the fellows don't tumble to the racket and kick me out of the hotel. I reckon the hotel people will want to throw me out, anyway."

"Not if you say you have an important letter for the Merriwells."

"Oh, I'll try it. It's a tenner, anyhow; and I'd be kicked all day for ten dollars a kick. Ten dollars is a good deal to a Weary Walker like me."

A smile spread over his greasy face.

"And a hundred is more."

"You bet! Oh, I'm the boy to work the game, if it can be worked!"

"You're in condition to catch?"

"Well, I'm not to say in the best possible condition, but I was a crackajack in my day, and I ain't forgot the twists. I'll show 'em some Weary Willie work that'll stick their eyes out!"

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE TRAMP CATCHER.

Sanford Hamp's middle-man made his way to the Palmer House, boldly inquired for some member of the Merriwell ball-team, stating that he had an important letter to deliver from their captain, and was overheard by Bruce Browning, who had left the room and was walking up and down in the lobby, pulling at his inseparable pipe.

Bruce turned and saw before him a greasy, disreputable fellow of the genus tramp, whose swollen, grimy face showed unmistakable signs of a too familiar acquaintance with drink.

A few minutes before the telegram from Galesburg had been received, and the cloud had been lifted from the hearts of Frank's friends.

"But this can't be the man!" was Bruce's thought. "He surely didn't mean such a tough-looking fellow as this?"

Then he demanded somewhat gruffly, instinctively drawing back from the tramp's too odorous presence:

"What is it? I'm a member of Merriwell's Athletic Team."

The tramp doffed his ragged hat, impressed by the great size and strength of the young giant before him,

and, fishing the letter from the depths of a torn pocket, handed it to Browning. It was addressed to the Athletic Team, and purported to have been written in Chicago by Merriwell:

"I am again on the trail of Jones. He has taken the train for Galesburg, and I shall follow him. The man who will deliver this note to you is a tramp, but I personally know that he is one of the best ball-catchers in the country. I don't think Bart ought to try to catch, even if his shoulder feels better. Put the tramp in Bart's place and go ahead, letting Swiftwing pitch. You can win the game, and I want you to. Don't worry about me. I am all right. I will telegraph you as soon as I reach Galesburg and will keep you posted by wire as to my movements. Trust the tramp. He is all right, and will catch great ball for you. I know you can win. MERRIWELL."

As soon as he had read the letter Bruce beckoned to the tramp and led the way to the room where most of the other members of the party were still gathered, talking over the telegram and rejoicing over the supposed news that Frank was all right.

All stared as Bruce came into the room followed by the tramp. The latter dropped into a richly upholstered chair, nonchalantly put his tattered hat on his knee, and familiarly surveyed the surprised group about him.

"I kin win der game fer ye," he declared, a grin on his unshaven, dirty face. "Merriwell knows I kin, and

he sent me. He gimme that letter, and he told me to hunt you fellers up here."

Carker changed his seat, to get farther away.

"Oh, I ain't a bit particular!" the tramp laughed, humorously rolling his watery eyes. "I'd jist as soon set by you as anybody. I've got the smell of the medders on me new outin'-suit, I reckon, but that's better than some things I could name. I never was proud!"

"It's from Merriwell!" said Bruce, giving the letter to Hodge. "There can't be any doubt about that."

Bart was also sure that the letter was from Merriwell, as he glanced it over. The imitation of Frank's handwriting was so clever that it would have deceived an expert.

Hodge read the letter aloud, while all eyes were fixed on the tramp; then passed the letter to the other members of the team. They were glad to get another message from Merry, but did not like the appearance of the catcher selected.

"He couldn't catch apples!" thought Bart. "What was Merry thinking about? He must have been crazy!"

"Where did you meet Merriwell?" Bruce asked.

"Near the Dearborn Street station, jist before he left the city. He tol' me the fix you was in, an' asked could I catch as I used to. I told 'im I could, and he gimme that and sent me. I'd 'a' come straight, but I

got to talkin' wid a chum an' the time passed. You know how 'tis, gents! The time is allus passin'!"

He waved a fat and greasy hand in a chummy way that made Greg Carker shiver.

"Call again in ten minutes," Hodge requested. "We want to talk this thing over."

"Cert. I ain't proud. The compliments people gives me at me back is giner'ly as good as the things they say to my face. So long, gents! I'll be waitin' fer ye! I'll say this, though, I kin catch in that game to win, if winnin's what you want!"

Bruce stopped him.

"Where did you ever catch?"

He winked his watery eyes.

"Gents, that's a matter of ancient hist'ry, an' I never was good at ancient hist'ry. But if you don't b'lieve that I can catch throw a dollar at me! I won't dodge it. Er take me out into some nice back yard and pitch baseballs at my head. Suit yerselves. So long! I'll be waitin' fer ye in the ante-chamber."

There was a long consultation after his departure. The result was what Sanford Hamp had anticipated. They decided to follow Merriwell's instructions, even though they did not like the tramp's appearance, if on trial they found that he really could catch.

Then the tramp was called back, and was taken by the team to a favorable point, where Swiftwing tried him thoroughlv with all kinds of pitched balls and

curves. To the astonishment of all, he proved to be a wonderfully clever catcher. He held the hottest balls that Swiftwing could send him, no matter how sudden the curves and shoots, and altogether did such creditable work that the team felt that Frank had been wise in sending him.

"Oh, Merriwell never makes any breaks!" Rattleton declared. "When the fellow came with the letter, that was enough to tell us that he was all right. Frank wouldn't have sent him, otherwise." Bink Stubbs walked up to big Bruce Browning:

"Do you know what I think?"

"I never knew you troubled yourself to do any thinking."

"Don't be funny, old man. For once I'm serious. That chap isn't a tramp!"

"What then?"

"It's one of Merry's practical jokes. No tramp could handle himself in that way. Why, he'd be worth a fortune to a National League team! He could get a big salary."

"If he'd let booze alone!"

"Perhaps he's made up for effect. That fellow, I tell you, is some crackajack catcher, and Merry has sent him in this disguise to give us a surprise. He can catch, and we're going to win this afternoon."

But Bart, in spite of his loyalty to Merriwell, still held doubts. He did not doubt the genuineness of the

letter, but he did doubt the tramp's ability when the rush and turmoil of a great ball-game was on. But he resolved to follow Merriwell's instructions, in spite of this.

The catching of the tramp, who gave his name as Willie Walker, was satisfactory, and the Athletic Team sent word to the Chicago Colts that in spite of the absence of Merriwell they would play the game as agreed that afternoon.

When Sanford Hamp learned of this, which he did from the lips of the tramp, he smiled a smile of deep satisfaction.

"That's all right. I thought it would work. The hundred is yours as soon as the game is ended. Make a bluff of good work, and then fall down at a critical time and let the Chicagos rake in the gate-money. If you do it as cleverly as I know you can, I don't know but I'll increase the little wad I've promised you!"

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE GAME BEGINS.

Bruce Browning was chosen captain of the team in the absence of Merriwell, because he could be depended on to keep a clear, cool head on his shoulders no matter what occurred, and the Athletic Team went out to the ball-grounds to meet the National Leaguers, with the tramp as catcher and Swiftwing as pitcher.

As it was the regular Chicago team of the National League, of course the betting was in favor of Chicago, in spite of the record which Merriwell's men had made against the Torontos at Niagara Falls. When it was known that the battery was to be a "freak" one—an Indian pitcher and a tramp catcher—and that Merriwell himself was not on the grounds, the odds against the Athletic Team jumped to astonishing figures. The betting-men were sure that the Merriwells would lose.

Sanford Hamp was sure, too, and he industriously took all the bets he could get, offering such odds on Chicago that many men were tempted to accept his offers in the hope that something might happen to throw the game to the Athletic Team; for in baseball there are so many features of uncertainty that a game may sometimes go to a team that has scarcely a single element of strength.

The day was glorious for ball-playing, and a mighty

throng had gathered to witness a battle royal. There were hosts of pretty girls in the grand stand, and the bleachers were packed, for the Chicago people loyally supported the Colts. Long before the game began, people were cheering and horns and megaphones dinned the air. The volume of sound increased while the teams were engaged in their warming-up, for the sight of the tramp catcher and the Indian pitcher was a novelty.

"The gate receipts will be something great!" said Hodge.

"If you and Merry were only the battery!" said Rattleton. "But we're going to win, anyway. Merry says we can, and I'm sure we can, when he says so."

"If Swiftwing don't go into the air again!" grunted Hodge. "And I'm afraid of that tramp! Still, he did catch like a professional."

This was the batting-order of the two teams and the positions of the men:

ATHLETIC TEAM.

Ready, 3b.

Gamp, cf.

Browning, 1b.

Rattleton, 2b.

Swiftwing, p.

Walker (the tramp), c.

Carker, lf.

Stubbs, ss.

Griswold, rf.

CHICAGOS.

Starrett, rf.

Docoram, ss.

Warford, cf.

Kith, lf.

Fleckley, 1b.

Steinway, 2b.

Winir, 3b.

Woodbury, c.

Dashmore, p.

Bruce was nervous and anxious, but he contrived to conceal the fact, and exerted himself to fill his men

with confidence. He had a talk with the tramp and Swiftwing, and a few words for each of the players.

The captain of the Chicagos offered the Athletic Team the privilege of the field or the bat.

"We'll go to the bat," said Browning, speaking to his men. "Their pitcher, Dashmore, is a new man. He's likely to be nervous, for he will be anxious to make a record in this first game. He is bound to realize that he is on trial and is watched by the crowd, and if we can hit him hard and break his heart in the first inning, we'll have things coming our way right at the start."

"Oh, I'll hit him hard!" chirped Ready, picking out a bat, for he was to be first up. "I always hit hard, even if I touch nothing but the circumambient air. Shall I put it into left field or deep center?"

Hodge did not like this chirping. He was watching the tramp and groaning inwardly because his shoulder seemed to be getting worse instead of better. He had mentally resolved to go behind the bat, in spite of the condition of his shoulder, if the tramp failed to do good work, but he realized now that this was wholly out of the question.

"I'm not so sure of things as I might be," was his thought. "Oh, if Merry were only here, and I could go behind the bat! We'd do up these confident Chicagos if such a thing could be done."

Where was Merriwell?

The umpire tossed a spotless ball to Dashmore, who caught it with one hand, and then carefully examined the pitcher's box and its surroundings. He was a trimly built fellow, with a long, thin nose, blue eyes, and closely cropped reddish hair. He was plainly nervous, as he looked at the yelling rooters, and heard the din of the crowd. He realized that those shouting thousands would hiss and hoot at him as wildly as they now cheered, if he failed to meet their expectations as a pitcher. Then he faced Jack Ready, who had stepped into position, and sent in as his first ball a swift one right over the plate.

"One strike!" said the umpire.

"Meet the ball!" Bruce commanded. "We can eat speed."

It was Browning's first experience as captain, but he knew that a swift ball should not be slashed at—and that was what he feared Ready would do—but should be met with the bat, the swiftness of the ball being all that is needed to drive it out. On the other hand, a slow ball should be hard batted.

Ready tried to meet the ball. He was considered one of the safest batters on the Athletic Team, but Dashmore's speed was so great that Ready made three fouls. Then the speed increased and Ready fanned out.

"I'll bub-bub-bub-bet ten dud-dollars nobody cuc-can

fan me out with speed!" Gamp boasted, as he took up the bat and stepped into position.

He swung at the first ball, which was an in shoot, and lined it hotly down to short-stop. But hot as it was, Docoram held it, and Gamp was out.

Browning smiled placidly as he loafed into place. Even the responsibilities of the position of captain seemed not to relieve him of his laziness.

"Well, boys, we'll begin it right here!" he slowly grunted.

"About time!" Danny chirped.

"This retires the side!" Dashmore exclaimed, his blue eyes shining with gratification, for the auspicious opening of the game and the manner in which his work was being received by the Chicago rooters pleased him. The first ball seemed fairly to burn the air, it came so swiftly. Bruce calmly let it go by.

"Strike one!"

"Here is where we begin work," he said again, lifting his bat. The ball appeared to come as swiftly as before.

Crack!

Bruce met it fairly and sent it flying into deep center. It was a three-base hit, and a contingent of Yale men, grouped in a body in the bleachers, sent up a roar as the big fellow tore along the bases.

"This is all right!" said Rattleton, as he took the bat. "If I can bring him in now!"

Harry made a desperate effort to bring Bruce in, but Dashmore's speed was entirely too much for him. He quickly fanned out, and the side was retired without a score. Grand stand and bleachers, and the grounds as well, appeared to go wild as the Colts came in from the field. Dashmore's fair face was flushed with pleasure, and his blue eyes were shining like stars.

"We've got 'em on the run!" said Woodbury, the Chicago catcher.

"You bet!" Dashmore responded.

Swiftwing and the tramp, Willie Walker, were conferring. Then Swiftwing walked away and entered the box, and Starrett came to the bat.

Bart Hodge sat on the bench, nervous and anxious. It seemed strange for the Athletic Team to be playing a game with him sitting there and another man behind the bat. And such a man! He felt disgraced when he looked at the tramp, for the fellow was apparently more repulsive-looking than when at the hotel. The evidences of dissipation were written all over his face.

"This thing grinds me!" Hodge was thinking. "I've known Merry to do queer things, but I'm sure never anything like this before. And how is it going to turn out? If Merry were only here, he could go behind the bat and catch for Swiftwing, if this fellow fails. I got this shoulder knocked out just at the wrong time!"

"Now we'll see the work of Weary Willie!" some one was piping from the crowd.

"Hurrah for Dusty Rhodes!" another yelled. The tramp grinned.

"First cousin o' Cecil Rhodes!" he called back, as he adjusted mask and breastpad. "W'en these fellers picked me up they found a Kimberley di'mond mine. See?"

"Might be a diamond if they'd rub the dirt off!" was shouted by a dudish fellow who stood by the bleachers with a cigarette between his teeth.

"Not a nasty cigarette smoker, anyway!" the tramp retorted.

"That's one on you, chummie!" Bink chattered across to Danny.

"I think I'll swear off on cigarettes now!" Danny chattered back.

"Do!" cried the tramp, whose ears appeared to be wonderfully acute. "You'll be as clean as me, then!"

Swiftwing faced Starrett. At the very outset the tramp came up under the bat and gave his signals to Swiftwing, who sent over an inside corner-cutter.

"Strike one!" called the umpire.

Starrett grasped the bat more firmly, as the tramp crossed the ball back and Swiftwing prepared again to throw.

It came with an out curve and missed the plate.

"Ball one."

Bart saw that the tramp was holding the balls all

right. The ball went back, and the Pueblo pitcher threw again.

"Ball two!"

Again it was wide of the plate. It was swifter than the others, but the tramp had smilingly gathered it in. Swiftwing stooped and rubbed the ball in the dirt next time.

"That's the stuff!" the tramp grinned.

"Make it dirty like me, and it'll be a winner."

Swiftwing signaled and threw an in curve. Starrett struck at it and fanned.

"Strike two."

"Them's the stuff!" the tramp shouted, as the ball plunked into his mitt and he quietly tossed it back.

"Do it ag'in, pardner!"

Swiftwing tried another out curve and missed the plate.

"Ball three!"

The tramp signaled. The crowd was buzzing with excitement, for the next pitched ball was sure to settle it. Swiftwing rubbed more earth on the ball, hesitated a moment, then sent in one at his best speed right over the plate.

Starrett saw that he must try to get it, and he swung. But he made a clean miss. The ball struck in the tramp's mitt and went through it, spinning off to one side, and Starrett jumped for first, while the spectators rose up and howled. The tramp leaped for

the ball, but appeared to be slow, so that when he got the ball and threw to first he was too late to cut Starrett off.

Hodge's hot heart flamed. He had seen the tramp's "error," and it had seemed unnecessary. Up to that time the catcher had held everything with apparent ease, but this important ball he let go through his mitt.

"If it wasn't for this shoulder, I'd ask Bruce to put me in there!" he growled. "That thing looked to be done purposely."

Docoram came up. Starrett was playing off first, and when the Indian threw he made a dash for second. The tramp held the ball and threw to second to cut him off, but it was so poor a throw that, though Rattleton held it, he could not get it on the runner in time.

Hodge gave the tramp a fierce questioning look, but the latter met it with his easy, confident grin. Sanford Hamp, from his seat in the bleachers, was watching Walker with gratification.

"I'd like to throw a bouquet to the hound!" was his thought. "That fellow would simply be great if he would only let up on booze."

Swiftwing's eyes were beginning to glitter. After getting the ball he faced toward the plate and stood a moment looking at the tramp in a peculiar way. But the tramp only smiled, and, putting up a dirty paw, lazily wagged a signal.

Having finished his stare, Swiftwing threw an underhand rise, Docoram struck it and drove it to the ground half-way between the home plate and the pitcher's box. It rose in a bounce and appeared to be going high over Swiftwing's head. Starrett had been playing off second to go to third.

With a leap like a mountain-lion, the Pueblo pitcher sprang into the air. He grasped and held the ball and seemed to turn in mid-air like a cat. The instant his feet struck the ground he threw to second. Starrett, who had made up his mind that he could reach third and was about to start on the run, saw the ball coming from Swiftwing's brown fingers and jumped back.

But Rattleton got the ball and put it upon the startled runner while the latter was off the bag; then turned and threw to first to cut off Docoram, who was making a lively sprint.

"Slide!" yelled the excited coacher near first.

A slide to first is most unusual, but Docoram tried it, hoping to astonish the umpire into favoring him, but big Bruce Browning was holding the ball before Docoram reached the base.

"Out, second and first!" shouted the umpire.

This was ball-playing extraordinary—ball-playing that was worth witnessing, for ordinarily only the man running to first would have been put out. The wild shout raised by the Yale men was taken up by the en-

tire body of spectators and swelled into a thunderous outburst of applause.

"Youse fellers is de warmest babies in der bunch!" the tramp shouted as soon as his voice could be heard. "Pardners, it makes me love yer. Do it ag'in!"

Sanford Hamp had hard work to check the impulse to take off his silk hat and wave it at the tramp.

"Walker is a born actor. If he'd let booze alone he'd be great. That was a great play those fellows made. I never saw anything like it."

The tramp's swollen features were beaming, and, turning to the Yale men who were barking out the Yale yell, he waved his cap.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

WHERE IS MERRIWELL?

As the applause subsided Warford came to the bat. Hodge was still watching the catcher. Swiftwing signaled to the tramp that he would send in a slow drop and the tramp nodded.

The Pueblo's delivery fooled the batter. The ball seemed to be a speedy one, coming straight over the plate; but it hung deceptively in the air, and Warford missed it. Hodge, who was paling and flushing by turns, saw it plunk into the mitt of the tramp.

"One strike!" called the umpire.

"Injun, you've got an eye!" chirped the tramp, as he tossed the ball back. "Do it ag'in!"

Swiftwing signaled and sent in a corner-cutter. Warford hesitated, then struck at it as it crossed the corner of the plate, and again missed.

"Now yer pleasin' me!" the tramp howled, as he sent back the ball.

The Pueblo signaled that he would again pitch a slow drop. But Warford was not to be fooled that way again. He saw that it was a drop. Two strikes had been called on him. He gaged the drop just right, and with a merciless slash drove the ball far out into deep center.

It flew to the left of the pitcher, far above his head,

and hissed on as if it meant never to stop. Warford was bounding for first.

"It's a home run!" some of the Chicagos were yelling.

Joe Gamp had turned about and was running as fast as his long legs would take him in the direction the ball was going. He was too close in, and it did not seem possible for him to spin the ground beneath him fast enough to enable him to get under the ball.

But Gamp was getting over the ground in a deceptive way. Warford passed first and started for second. The ball-cranks were howling and hundreds were standing up in the bleachers, swinging hats and handkerchiefs.

"Fly, you dear old clown!" yelled Ready from third, funneling his hands to make the sound carry, though he did not expect Gamp to hear him.

"He's a swaller!" laughed the tramp. "He's got wings!"

He was speaking of Gamp, not Warford, though Warford was sprinting along at a lively gait.

As he ran, Gamp turned his head now and then to look toward the oncoming ball. It was slowly dropping, yet still it seemed that it must go over his head. Then he gave a great leap that rivaled the jump of the Indian pitcher, stretched his long legs upward, and gathered in the ball.

The thing was marvelously done.

The Yale yell rent the air. The tramp threw his cap on the ground and leaped on it, as an echo of that yell burst from his throat. When he picked up the hat and jammed it on his tangled hair his watery eyes were strangely bright, and his cheeks flushed with a color that was not of drink. Evidently he had been a ball-player in his day, and such work awoke to the full his old instincts.

"The earth's comin' our way!" he yelled.

"A lot of it seems to have stuck to you already!" was the ungracious fling of a man in the bleachers.

"That's right, pardner. But I'm willin' ter divide. I ain't any hawg!"

As the Athletic Team came in from the field, Bart Hodge left the benches and approached the tramp.

"A word with you!" he requested, in an ominous way.

"Cert!" Walker chirped. "Allus willin' to talk with gentlemen who air my ekals!"

"I was watching you a while ago," said Hodge, ignoring this. "I saw you let that ball go through your mitt and fumble it before you made the throw. You had a chance to put that man out and you did not."

The tramp looked indignant.

"I half-way believe that you did that purposely," Hodge declared, while his eyes shone. "I shall keep my eyes on you. If more of that sort of thing occurs, I'll know what you're up to, for it's not likely that

you'll hold all the balls that amount to nothing and make errors when they're sure to count against our side."

An anxious look came into Walker's swollen face.

"Don't be hard on me, pardner!"

"I don't want to be hard on you, but I want you to know that there can't be any monkey business here. If I see that you are not playing white, you'll go right out, and don't you forget it! I mean business. I'll have the captain take you out of the catcher's box so quick that it will make your head swim. I don't like what I saw, and I want you to know that I don't like it."

There was something rather terrifying in Hodge's earnestness. He seemed almost fierce, and the light in his eyes told the tramp that he was a dangerous man when aroused.

"I'm playin' fair, pardner!" Walker pleaded. "I'm a-goin' to help you fellers win this game, an' if I let another sich ball pass er make another wild throw like that, you kin kick my old hide into fishin'-nets. That's the word o' Willie Walker!"

"I shall watch you!" Hodge warned, walking away, as his friends moved toward the bench and Swiftwing took up the bat.

Dashmore caught the ball tossed to him by the umpire, pulled his cap closely down over his closely cropped reddish hair, and searched the Pueblo with

his blue eyes, thrusting out his sharp nose as if he would aid his vision by the sense of smell.

Swiftwing's impassive brown face was as difficult to read as that of a wooden Indian in front of a cigar-store. He stood ready to bat, with his wagon-tongue uplifted, and in a pose that was so unstudiedly and unconsciously beautiful that there was a running-fire of handclapping.

"If you want to win applause, you should pick out Indians for your ancestors," chirped Bink. "That's the way the Indian looked who sighted the catboat of Columbus."

Danny blew a cloud of cigarette smoke through his nostrils.

"A runt like you would never gain applause if he were as red as Michigan copper and had a Montezuman for his grandmother! Come off the dump!"

Dashmore took a signal from Woodbury; then sent in a hot liner straight over the plate. Swiftwing tried to connect with it, but failed.

"One strike!"

Dashmore tried this again, but slipped slightly as his arm went up and the ball missed the plate. Swiftwing saw that it would miss and did not strike at it.

"Ball one!" called the umpire.

Dashmore had given his catcher to understand that he would use speed and a straight ball, working the corners.

The ball came again, hissing hot. Swiftwing did not swing at it.

"Strike two!"

"That there pitcher is makin' the atmosphere smoke!" said the tramp. "Didn't ye see the flash then, like a trolley goin' along the wire in the night? But I think I c'u'd hold him!"

Again the ball came red-hot from Dashmore's fingers. Swiftwing connected with it, belted it out, and leaped for first. Docoram, the short-stop, leaped for it, knocked it down, fumbled it a moment, then threw swiftly to first. But the terrific running of the Pueblo put him there ahead of the ball.

"That was an error that Willie Walker didn't make!" the tramp chirped in a voice loud enough for Hodge to hear.

Then the tramp walked into place to bat. Hodge, from the coacher's position near first, fixed his eyes on Walker, and the latter, noticing this, gave him an expansive smile in return.

"Oh, I'm a warm baby!" he called to Hodge, as he put up the bat and turned his eyes on Dashmore.

The ball came like a bullet. Swiftwing was playing off first, closely watched by Dashmore and Woodbury. The tramp "took" the ball, letting a "strike" be called on him, and Swiftwing fairly flew toward second.

Woodbury threw to second, but again, the wonderful

running of the Pueblo put him on the base ahead of the ball. Dashmore's blue eyes took on a steely, determined gleam. He increased the speed of the next ball, sending it in with all his might. The tramp struck at it and missed.

Swiftwing was playing off second, but he was so closely watched that he could not steal. Hodge's face was again paling and flushing.

"I'll tear der cover off of it this time!" the tramp declared, with gritted teeth.

But again he fanned, as the ball hissed over the plate.

"Three strikes, out!" said the umpire.

Hodge's face grew dark and wrathful.

"That strike-out was intentional!" said Greg Carker, as he arose to take the bat.

The tramp walked back, with a queer look in his watery eyes.

"Gents," he said apologetically, "that new Chicago pitcher is the very old devil!"

Again Dashmore signaled "speed," and again the ball burned the air. It was too fast for Carker, and he did not strike.

"Strike one!" the umpire sang out. The balls were cutting the corners. Browning, who was near Hodge, gave the latter a placid look.

"How do the cards run to-day?" he drawled.

"Dead against us!" snapped Bart.

"That's what I thought. We seem to be getting it in the neck. Chicago has picked up a wonder in that new man!"

"And we've got a scoundrel in that tramp, I'm afraid!"

"That's what I'm beginning to think."

"Why in the name of everything did Merry send him?"

"If Merry hadn't sent him, I think I'd lay him off, even if it lost the game."

"I'm afraid it's going to be lost, anyway."

"Brace up!" Bruce urged, remembering that he was captain.

Sanford Hamp was smiling from his seat in the bleachers.

"The old guy is bamboozling those fellows beautifully," was his thought. "I'll have to raise him for this kind of work. He's simply great!"

Where was Merriwell?

CHAPTER XL

INTERESTING WORK.

The next ball was straight over the plate. Again Carker hesitated and did not strike.

"Strike two!" called the umpire.

Carker's face flushed. The bored look had long ago vanished. He gripped the bat anew and almost breathlessly awaited the next ball. It seemed to be coming the same way. He slashed at it.

"Three strikes, out!" said the umpire.

"I never saw such speed before!" Carker grumbled, as he took his place in the benches. "No one could hit such balls!"

"If Merry were here he could get 'em!" Rattleton declared.

"You bet he could!" chirped Bink, stepping out, for he was to be the next up. "Gents, there's a great load of responsibility resting on my manly shoulders, but I guess I'm equal to it. If none of the rest of you can hit Dashmore and push that Indian along, I'm the man for the business!"

Then Bink walked into position and fanned out on three pitched balls, each of which was in the mitt of the catcher before Bink swung at it. Throwing down the bat, he walked over to Danny.

"Kick me!" he begged.

And Danny kicked him so hard that Bink was fairly lifted from his feet. Not a single score had been made in the inning.

Swiftwing conferred with the tramp and again entered the pitcher's box. Hodge jealously watched the tramp as the first ball came in. It was a "ball," wide of the plate and fairly speedy, and the tramp held it.

"Oh, he always holds them, when it amounts to nothing!" Hodge grumbled. The ball came in, Kith struck at it and missed, and again the tramp held the ball, tossing it back to the pitcher with a flourish.

Then the Pueblo threw an in curve, which Kith did not swing at, and the tramp easily held that.

"Strike two!" called the umpire.

Then the ball came over the plate, and Kith lined out a long high fly into left field. Carker ran for it, leaped and seemed about to miss it, but it stuck in his left hand. The Yale cry rose on the air, and the tramp, waving his hat, greeted it with an oily grin.

"That's the stuff!" he shouted. "We are gittin' inter gear!"

Sanford Hamp bestowed on him an approving smile.

After two balls and one strike, all of which the tramp held, Fleckley, who was next up, drove a grounder down past Ready so swiftly that the apple-cheeked third baseman, though he made a lively jump, could not get his hands on it, and Fleckley easily took first.

Fleckley flew for second on the first pitched ball, seeming to feel that he could steal safely on the tramp. The tramp held the ball in his mitt and threw to Rattleton on second. Rattleton got the ball and put it on Fleckley, but it flew out of his hands as he did so, and Fleckley was safe on second.

The Chicago rooters were roaring.

"Fleckley will never get any farther!" was yelled from the Yale contingent.

Then Steinway, after one strike, drove another ball by Ready. Ready leaped again, and again failed to get his hands on it, and Steinway took first. Fleckley started for third amid a tumult of excitement, but Carker ran in behind Ready and got the ball so quickly that Fleckley was forced back to second.

Hodge had turned his attention to Swiftwing, and so had Bruce. Swiftwing was being hit by the Chicago men. The Yale rooters and every one else realized it, and the friends of the Merriwells began to grow decidedly anxious.

"The Pueblo will soon go up in the air!" thought Hodge, feeling nervously of his lame shoulder. "I wish I could pitch, or catch, or do something. They're going to put it all over us! Oh, if Merry were only here!"

No other message had come from Galesburg, and the hope had been growing in him that Merriwell was on his way back and would yet appear in time to save

the game, even if the Pueblo pitcher proved a failure. Once before, in a critical game, Swiftwing had lost control in this way, and the iron nerve of Merriwell, who went into the box in spite of the horrible condition of his wrist, alone saved the day for the Athletic Team.

But could Merriwell come now? Hodge had been hoping so. He had told this hope to others, and a belief was being cherished by all that their great captain and manager might yet appear in time to save the team by his wonderful pitching and generalship.

"I'm no good as captain!" Bruce was telling himself. "Somehow, I can't put the spirit into the fellows that Frank can. We need him! We need him!"

He felt that he would jump for joy if Frank should appear and take the burden of responsibility, and step into the pitcher's box.

"With Swiftwing and the tramp as battery, we're simply not in it!" was Hodge's gloomy conclusion.

And again he was filled with that overmastering wish for Merriwell.

"This is more important than catching that rascal, Jones!" he inwardly fumed. "Why doesn't he let the scoundrel go? We're done up without him!"

The Chicagos were in a happy frame of mind. The gate receipts were something enormous, and that money they believed would be theirs.

Winir came to the bat with a look of confidence.

The others had hit the Indian pitcher, and he believed he could do the same.

"He's a Winner!" the Chicagos shouted, punning the name.

"I am always a Winir!" the batter flung back. "See me connect!"

Swiftwing signaled the tramp and pitched an in shoot. Winir swung at it, and, to the astonishment of everybody, drove another ball along the same track by third. But Jack Ready did not intend to let another such go by, and when he saw this ball coming he told himself that he would stop it or die. Then he threw himself at full length and stopped the ball.

Fleckley and Steinway had been forced from their bases, and Fleckley was doing his level best to get to third. The spectators were roaring—simply roaring. Stubbs, the short-stop, reached third ahead of Fleckley, and with foot on base caught the ball thrown by Ready, who did not rise from the ground but merely sat up to throw. Then Stubbs threw to first to catch Winir, but Winir beat the ball and was safe.

"Out, third!" said the umpire.

Steinway was now on second, Winir on first, and two men were out—Fleckley and Kith—as Woodbury came to the bat.

Swiftwing's dark eyes were very bright, but this was the only sign of emotion he exhibited. He realized that the Chicagos were hitting him, and if he

had not realized it, the exclamations and shouts of the spectators would have told him so. The knowledge made him cautious—too cautious, in fact; for this over-caution caused him to give Woodbury a base on balls.

Then Dashmore, Chicago's new pitcher, who was on trial for the first time in this game, came up next at the bat, to be faced by his opponent, the Indian pitcher. Swiftwing was still over-cautious, and two "balls" were called on him, for balls that did not come near the plate. Then he put one straight over and got a "strike" called.

The tramp was holding everything in a beautiful way. Hodge, who was all the time watching him, even while fuming against the Pueblo, could find nothing in the work to cavil at. Again the Pueblo pitcher put the ball straight over, and Dashmore knocked a long fly into the right field.

Danny sprinted for it, and the little fellow pulled it down with a splendid leap, just as Carker had done—and Chicago was again retired without scoring.

CHAPTER XL.

MERRIWELL.

The Athletic Team was worried.

"Chicago is getting onto Swiftwing, and they're going to stuff the hammering—hammer the stuffing out of him!" said Rattleton to Hodge.

The Pueblo realized the same thing and appeared to want to keep away from the other members of the team. He was never talkative, and now he had not a word to say. Only once did he exhibit any feeling. Then he turned with blazing eyes toward the cheering Chicago rooters in the bleachers and gave them a fierce glance.

Danny stepped chirpingly to the bat, and fanned out under the fierce speed of Chicago's new pitcher. He looked dazed as he heard the final ball plunk into the catcher's mitt just as he swung to meet it. Then, with a solemnity as great as Swiftwing's, he walked slowly over to Bink.

"Chummie, I repeated your beautiful performance. Kick me hard!"

"You worthless little runt, you bet I will!" Stubbs howled; and he viciously kicked him with both feet, to the great amusement of ball-players and spectators. Ready came up—the head of the batting-list, "We've got to get right in and 'do' this pitcher!"

said Bruce, who had a good deal of confidence in Ready's hitting-abilities. "Take your time and meet the ball. You can do it."

"Sure!" chirped Jack. But Ready could no more touch that swift delivery than if the ball were chain-lightning, and he, too, fanned out, amid the yells of the Chicago rooters.

"There's a good deal depending on you, old fellow!" Bruce called to Gamp, as the latter walked awkwardly from the benches.

"As the sus-suspender sus-said to the suspender but-but-ton!" stuttered Gamp, as he took up the bat. "Here gug-gug-goes!"

And Gamp fanned out.

The Athletic Team had seldom met anything so discouraging. Three men had struck out without touching the ball. Small wonder that Dashmore came in with his face flushed and his blue eyes shining, and the Chicago rooters went mad with joy.

"Oh, for Merriwell!" Hodge groaned. "Why don't he come?"

Starrett, the head of the Chicago batting-list, came to the bat in the second half of the third inning, and he opened brilliantly for the National Leaguers with a hit past Danny into the right field.

Docoram, who followed him, did not wait for him to steal second, but slashed a ball out over the head

of Rattleton. Then Warford smashed the first pitched ball out into the left field.

The Chicago rooters were in a frenzy of excitement, while the Merriwell rooters were gloomily silent. Sanford Hamp was smiling cheerfully from his place in the bleachers.

"That Indian pitcher has gone right into the air! The work cut for Dusty Rhodes will be dead easy."

Warford's ball into the left field was a safe base-hit, and would have been all right if Starrett had been satisfied to stop on third, but he tried to go home from second. Carker got the ball, and, with a fine throw, lined it to the tramp. The tramp caught it handsomely and nailed it upon Starrett as he made his slide for the home plate.

Starrett was out. Everybody was howling, for the work had been of the most exciting kind.

The tramp leaped into the air with a triumphant yell and tried to kick the back of his head. His watery eyes shone and he seemed wildly excited.

"How is that for a Weary Willie?" he screeched. "Did ye see me? Oh! did ye see me?"

"What's the matter with the fellow?" Sanford Hamp fiercely hissed under his breath. "Has he gone crazy? Why did he do that? He could easily have let that fellow score!"

Docoram had reached second and Warford first.

Swiftwing's brown face looked a dirty yellow, and he was trembling, though he still strove to hide every indication of emotion.

Again he became cautious—so cautious that he gave Kith his base on balls and filled the bases.

"Oh, for Merriwell!" Hodge groaned for the hundredth time. Then he heard an ear-splitting yell of joy from Danny, which was followed by whooping yells from the throat of almost every member of the team. Looking up, he saw Merriwell.

Frank had just come upon the field. He was in uniform, with the white Yale Y on his breast. Hodge bounded to his feet like a madman.

"Merry!" he yelled. "Whoop! Merry!"

His voice choked and he could say no more. But he ran up to Frank, and fighting his way through the struggling members of the team, who were rushing wildly from the field, crowding round Merriwell and acting like a lot of maniacs, he put a hand on Frank's shoulder. Bart's breast was heaving with emotion, his face was hotly flushed, and there were tears in his eyes.

"You've come, Merry! Hurrah! We're all right now!"

Merriwell looked curiously at the figure in mask and pad behind the bat. Swiftwing was hurrying forward from the pitcher's box.

"Glad you've come!" said the Pueblo. "I'm glad

to have you take my place. Can't pitch any more! Take my place!"

Then the Pueblo turned away, with a strange light in his dark eyes, and walked with dignified stride toward the benches. Again Merriwell looked at the tramp.

"He's doing better than at first," explained Hodge, catching the inquiring glance. "I wanted to kick him out of the nine at first, but he's doing better."

"And your shoulder?"

"Well, you know if I could use it he wouldn't be there! I wouldn't have let him go there, even for your orders!"

The ball-game seemed to have come to an end. But the news that Merriwell, the missing captain and manager of the Athletic Team, had appeared on the grounds was spreading through the throng like wild-fire. The Yale contingent in the bleachers was again barking out the Yale yell, and the Merriwell rooters everywhere were hurrahing. Frank beckoned to the tramp, and walked toward the pitcher's box, where they conferred.

"Can you hold the double-shoot?" Merry asked.

"Der what?"

"The double-shoot."

Seeing the puzzled look, Frank explained.

"I kin hold any old thing. Send 'em along!"

"How did you get on the team?"

"I come to win fer yer behind der bat. Oh, I'm a catcher frum headwaters, I am!"

"How are we standing?"

"Last half third innin', one man out, and nary a score!"

There was no time for further talk. Frank sent the tramp back to his place, and the umpire called "play ball!"

The Athletic Team had hastened into the field, crazy with delight. Sanford Hamp was scowling from the benches.

"But it's all right!" he whispered to himself. "They say this Merriwell is a wizard pitcher; but no matter how fine he is, the tramp will throw the game. I'm all right!"

Fleckley came to the bat, and Frank tried him with the double-shoot with the first pitched ball. Fleckley did not like its appearance, and refused to swing at it, and it struck in the catcher's mitt. The tramp dropped it, and came near letting Docoram come home from third.

Frank shook his head warningly at the tramp and again tried the double-shoot. Fleckley swung, but did not connect, and again the tramp failed to hold the ball.

"Strike two!" called the umpire.

This was enough to convince Merriwell that the tramp could not hold the double-shoot, and he saw

that in the work now cut out for him he must depend on speed alone, with headwork.

He signaled the tramp catcher and sent a ball right over the plate. It was a high ball that literally burned the air. Fleckley struck out, and, to Frank's gratification, the tramp clung to the ball.

When Steinway came to the bat, Merriwell developed surprising speed. The balls went over the heart of the plate with such terrific force that they seemed to lift the tramp right up into the air.

But he held them. Steinway struck out on three pitched balls, and the Athletic Team came in from the field howling.

Then Frank had a talk with Swiftwing, in which he contrived to say many things that tended to take the soreness out of the Indian's heart and make him feel that, after all, he had not disgraced himself in the pitcher's box. The tramp rubbed admiringly up against Merriwell.

"Pardner!" he cried. "It does me heart good to ketch fer a man wot kin t'row a ball! You'se der greatest stuff I ever ketched, I'm proud of yer!"

Merriwell gave him an approving glance.

"You held those balls finely. No one could have done better!"

The Yale men were again barking, and the tramp turned toward them and lifted his hat.

"Do it ag'in!" he shouted. "It does me good to hear ye!"

Then he returned to Frank, plucked at his sleeve, and drew him aside, to whisper something into his ear. Frank drew back and gave the tramp an astonished survey, while a strange light came into his eyes. He gripped Walker's hand and spoke to him for a moment in a low tone.

"That tramp is all right!" he declared to Hodge, a moment later. "I was shy of him at first, but he's all right. We can trust him!"

"Glad to know that he's all you thought he was," was Bart's reply, which Frank thought a bit enigmatical, for as yet he knew nothing of the manner in which the tramp had secured the position of catcher.

"I've been afraid from the first that he would throw the game," said Carker. "And I'm still afraid."

"You needn't be!" was Frank's statement. "I can assure you positively that he is all right."

Was Merriwell fooled?

"The old hound is playing his cards well!" Sanford Hamp was muttering, as he watched Walker. "I'll have to raise the amount I promised him. He's a born actor."

Browning loafed confidently to the bat, "smiling," as Danny said, "like a summer sea-serpent." All were confident. since Merry's appearance, and Bruce re-

lieved of the responsibility of the captain's position, was lazily happy.

But the speed of Dashmore was too great for Bruce, and he fanned out, to his unspeakable disgust. Rattleton came up, excited and twisting his sentences in a remarkable way.

"I'm so see I don't know whether I can proud or not!" he gurgled. "I mean I'm so proud I don't know whether I can see the ball or not. But here goes! Hurrah for Merriwell!"

Then he slashed away, fanning twice, and was put out on a high foul.

"That Chicago man is a wonder!" was Frank's comment. "He has great speed!"

"Nothin' 'tall like yours, pardner!" grinned the tramp. "Your balls was so hot they blistered my hands through the mitt. Never seen nothin' like it!"

Merriwell came to the bat. Dashmore flashed him a glance out of those gleaming blue eyes and put on his highest speed. Frank met this first pitched ball without any effort to "kill" it, and placed it in the right field.

"Oh, we're right all now—I mean all right now!" crowed Rattleton, as Frank took first.

"Pardners, here's ter duplecate de performance!" the tramp boasted, as he stepped into position.

Then he followed with a little place hit over the

short-stop. Frank, who had played well off first, was running as the bat cracked against the ball. Short-stop and center-fielder were both trying to get the ball, racing toward each other. The Yale men broke out enthusiastically as Merry passed second and tore like a steam-engine toward third.

The ball came in; but Frank beat it with a long, swift slide, and was safe.

"What's the matter with Dusty Rhodes?" some fellows were yelling.

"Nuttin' der matter wid him but his fine clo'es!" the tramp yelled back.

"Bring Merriwell home!" Hodge piped to Carker, as the latter came to bat.

But Carker was not equal to that work. Dashmore's speed simply paralyzed him, and he struck out with bewildering quickness, retiring the side again without a score.

With Frank in the box and the tramp behind the oat, Winir came up. The Chicago rooters encouragingly yelled to him that he was a "Winner," but the encouragement availed nothing.

Merriwell again put the balls straight over the plate, and with such speed that the tramp rose up in the air as he caught them, while his watery eyes glistened. But the tramp held every ball as if it were gold and he was to own it if he caught it.

Winir fanned out, and Woodbury took the bat, to be struck out in the same way.

"Talk about speed!" the Chicago batters began to growl. "There's nothing like this in the National League! Nobody could touch such balls."

Dashmore, the new Chicago pitcher, was up next. Merriwell looked him over, sized him up, and then, using nothing but terrific speed, struck him out so quickly that Dashmore's head fairly swam. The side was out, and still there was no score.

CHAPTER XLII.

FRANK MERRIWELL'S SPEED.

Dashmore entered the pitcher's box resolved that he would not let the pitcher of the Athletic Team beat him in speed and control, and he had no trouble in striking out Bink and Danny. Ready got a hit, however, and reached second, but got no farther, for Gamp was caught out on a ball to third, and the side was retired.

From that time on until the beginning of the ninth inning, the game was a battle royal between great pitchers, in which the tramp catcher proved himself to be a veritable wonder. Only twice did he drop Merriwell's terrific balls, though nearly every time the ball plunked into his hands its speed seemed to lift him almost from his feet. But he clung to the hottest, grinning and shouting in his greasy, confident way, and now and then asserting, as he tossed back the ball, that he was "de warmest baby in der bunch." Merriwell was delighted with him.

Dashmore kept up his great speed through three or four innings. Hits were made off him now and then, but they were ineffective and he kept them scattered; but as the battle raged hotter and fiercer, the new

Chicago man began to lose control and seemed also to be losing heart. Merriwell was too much for him. He had expected to cover himself with glory because of his great speed, and, lo! another man had dropped out of the air, as it were, and now completely overshadowed him.

The spectators went into frenzies of applause and howled themselves hoarse over the beautiful work of the batteries and players. The Yale men in the bleachers kept the Yale cry incessantly going, and the tramp, sending it back now and then, appeared to grow lithe and more manly under its sound, while his watery eyes glistened in an indescribable way.

Sanford Hamp gloomed and growled and swore by turns. Things were not going to suit him. The tramp seemed to be strangely playing to help the Merriwells to win, instead of trying to throw the game, as he had promised. The Merriwells were filled with wild exultation. The wonderful work of their captain and pitcher made them love him more than ever, and at times they could hardly resist the temptation to seize him and lift him aloft in their arms and carry him in a triumphal march round the diamond.

At the end of the eighth inning Sanford Hamp wormed his way out of the bleachers, and approaching the tramp, who had been doing exceptionally fine work, tried to speak to him.

"You've played me a trick, Walker!" he hissed.

"Git out o' my way!" the tramp howled, straightening to his full height.

"I want a word with you!"

"Git out o' my way!"

The watery eyes were blazing. Hamp took him by the shoulder, as if to whisper something to him, and the tramp, with an awful look in the face, smashed his tempter between the eyes with his catching-mitt.

Sanford Hamp reeled back, while the unexpected scene raised excited cries.

"I'll settle with you for this!" he hissed.

"Go 'long!" the tramp shouted in a fury of passion. "Go 'long, or I'll kick you into ribbons!"

A special policeman pushed forward, but Merriwell interrupted him and told him that the fellow deserved more than he received for interfering with the catcher; and, as Hamp had disappeared, the incident was passed over and quickly forgotten in the excitement of the game. Merriwell himself did not understand just what had taken place, for the tramp refused to answer questions.

Merriwell was first at the bat in the beginning of the ninth inning. Dashmore, who had been struck out by Frank several times, was eager to strike out

Frank. Therefore, he pulled himself together and tried to get his former speed. But Merriwell quietly picked out a favorable ball, which he met squarely, and lined out a three-base hit, duplicating Bruce's three-bagger in the second inning.

"See me duplercate de performance!" chirped the tramp, coming next to the bat.

But he did not. He struck the second pitched ball, but it went up into the air, and Steinway, the second baseman, got under it and caught him out. Frank on third was watching for an opportunity to score; but Carker, who followed the tramp, fanned.

Then Stubbs came to the bat. As Stubbs and Danny were the poorest batters on the list, Frank knew that the chances were ten to one that Stubbs would be unable to do anything against the speedy Chicago pitcher. Two strikes were called, and Merriwell, sure that Stubbs would strike out on the next pitched ball, ran right off the base without waiting for the ball to go in.

Instead of delivering the ball, Dashmore turned and threw to third, and Frank was caught between third and the home plate. Winair, the third-baseman, chased Frank toward home, and Dashmore leaped from the pitcher's box and came up on the base-line between Frank and the home plate.

Field, bleachers, and grand stand were in a roar of excitement. Merriwell was in a dangerous and ticklish place, as he played back and forth between the third baseman and the pitcher.

Finally, the pitcher, having the ball between Frank and the home plate, threw the ball to Winir, as Frank ran back toward the third baseman. Frank wheeled like a cat, and by a rapid dive, passed the pitcher before the ball could get back to him.

The din from the field and the bleachers became deafening. Everybody was shouting and yelling. The catcher was now the only man between Merriwell and the home plate, but the catcher was waiting for him.

The third baseman threw to the catcher. Frank started back, followed two or three steps by the catcher. The pitcher was now between Frank and the third baseman and close to Frank, and the catcher made a quick throw to him, believing that the pitcher could put the ball on the daring runner. The instant the catcher threw, Frank wheeled again with that lightning leap, and, going like a shot for the home plate, took it on a slide.

The uproar was tremendous; so terrific, in fact, that the voice of the umpire could not be heard, as he excitedly shouted that Frank was safe. The pitcher had

returned the ball to the catcher, but so rapid had been Merriwell's movements that he beat the ball.

The last score of the whole game had been made—and made by Frank Merriwell!

Two strikes had already been called on Stubbs, and as soon as the excitement had somewhat subsided, Dashmore, who had returned to the box, sent in a hot ball. Stubbs knew it would be a "strike," and that he could not touch the ball; and in his wild exuberance—for Frank's clever work had set him crazy—he flung the bat into the air.

"Three strikes, out!" said the umpire.

"Who cares?" Stubbs yelled, turning a handspring.

The side was out. In the second half of the ninth, Starrett, the head of the batting-list of the Chicago Colts, came up first.

Merriwell's speed seemed to be greater than ever. Dashmore's greatest could not compare with it. And the wonderful tramp behind the bat held the balls.

Starrett struck out. Docoram followed and also struck out.

"Whoop!" screeched the tramp. "Do it ag'in, pardner!"

Frank was ready to do it again. Warford came up, and he, too, struck out.

Not a single safe base-hit had been made off Merri-

Frank Merriwell's Speed.

well. The game was ended, and this was the score by innings:

	I	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Athletic Team	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	I—I
Chicago Colts	0	✓0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0—0

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE END OF THE CHASE.

"Pardners, I couldn't do it, even for Sanford Hamp's money. When I heard that Yale cry, my battered old hulk grew young again."

The Athletic Team were again at the Palmer House, and the tattered tramp pitcher was telling them a strange story. His breath was redolent of liquor, and his watery eyes now and then shed copious tears. But his language was no longer the jargon of tramps.

"I just couldn't do it!" he went on. "I know I'm a worthless old bum. I'm simply a Weary Willie, and I'm not trying to deny it. But I was a Yale man once, pardners, though you wouldn't believe it to look at me. That Yale college cheer took me back to the old days. I saw the old fence. I was again in the campus with the college buildings round me. I was a Yale man—a catcher on the old Yale nine! I woke up; and I swore I'd help the Yale Athletic Team win that game or die. When Hamp came over to me I wanted to kill him!"

He choked, blew his red nose violently, and when he spoke again the tears he was shedding and the liquor he had recently swallowed thickened his voice.

"But there ain't any hope for me, gents!" he declared, dropping back toward the old tramp patter.

"Drink downed me. It lost me everything. I forgot all that's worth knowin', chief of which is that a man may always be a man, if he wants to. I feel a little bit now as if 'twould be pleasant ag'in. But I know that I'll take whatever money you kind gents is a mind ter give me and swaller it in drink, and that I'll strike the highways as soon's I'm out er Chicago and ag'in be a Weary Willie an' a Dusty Rhodes. It's writ in the Book o' Fate, and I can't git away frum it!"

"And he can catch!" Bart exclaimed admiringly, after the tramp had departed.

"A wonderful catcher. When he told me his true name and that he had once been a catcher on a Yale college nine, I remembered stories of him. A Yale man and a wonderful ball-player—wrecked!"

"Worse than wrecked!" said Carker.

"Yes, worse than wrecked!"

* * * * *

It had not taken Merriwell long to tell the story of his disappearance. When he dropped through the hole in the upper hall that was covered with bits of plastering, he fell into a cellarlike place. The fall was a heavy one, and the manner in which he landed gave his neck a dangerous twist and rendered him unconscious.

When he came to himself he was in an adjoining room, in bed, waited upon by a chattering old man,

who seemed to be a half-maniac. This old man had heard the fall and had carried him out of the cellar into this room. Not only that, but he had made himself Frank's attending physician, and in the course of his supposed duties in this line had poured down his patient's throat a draught that caused Frank to sleep like a log for many hours.

When Merriwell came out of this sleep his neck pained him and his head felt strangely large and light; but he was otherwise all right; and these unpleasant feelings passed away after he had been a short time in the purer outer air. He made his way hurriedly out of the place, for he had discovered that the time for the ball-game was at hand, and then had hastened to the hotel, put on his Yale Athletic Team suit, and reached the ball-grounds as already described.

"We were fools for being taken in by those forgeries!" growled Hodge.

"I don't think so," said Frank, looking over the forgery of Sanford Hamp. "If I hadn't known any better, I should have been deceived by this bit of work myself. It looks just like my writing!"

* * * * *

With a cowboy yell, a man jumped along a narrow street of the Windy City, dragging another man by a lariat. It was the little street in which Merriwell had lost sight of Madison Jones.

The cowboy was Bill Higgins, the "roper from the

Cimarron," and the man who was being unceremoniously jerked along with the lasso round his neck was Jones himself.

"Dingdest chase ye ever saw!" cried Higgins, giving the rope a yank that threw Madison Jones down on the cobblestones. "He run up that way, and I danced up after 'im, an' when he jumped I let the ol' rope go, and I got 'im! He's yer meat, Merriwell. I don't want him!"

Merriwell and Hodge, again in pursuit of Madison Jones, had strangely encountered Bill Higgins in the very heart of Chicago. He had joined them in the pursuit, declaring that nothing could please him better than to take part in "sich a round-up."

This was the result.

"Merriwell," he said, turning for a moment from Jones, "if I'd knowed you fellers was shore enough in this hyer city, dinged if I wouldn't have come 'fore I started. You've got to go back with me to the ranch. The hull outfit will be tickled to death to see ye! You've got to go! Understand? If ye don't, hanged if I don't rope ever' one of ye, and tie ye up hoofs and horns, and carry you out there 'thout saying another word about it. You hear me!"

"Then we'll go!" laughed Merriwell. "I think I should like to see Badger's ranch!"

"Whoop!" Higgins yelled. "We've got our brand-in'-irons on this feller! Let's drive him into the cat-

tle-pens quick's we kin. We kin start fer the ranch in the morning! Whoop! I'm going to telygraph the ole man this very night that you fellers air shore comin'!"

And he did!

THE END.

“BEST OF ALL BOYS’ BOOKS”

THE FAMOUS Frank Merriwell Stories

By **BURT L. STANDISH**

No modern series of tales for boys and youths has met with anything like the cordial reception and popularity accorded to the Frank Merriwell Stories.

There must be a reason for this and there is. Frank Merriwell, as portrayed by the author, is a jolly, whole-souled, honest, courageous American lad, who appeals to the hearts of the boys. He has no bad habits, and his manliness inculcates the idea that it is not necessary for a boy to indulge in petty vices to be a hero. Frank Merriwell's example is a shining light for every ambitious lad to follow.

Twenty-four volumes ready

Frank Merriwell's School Days	Frank Merriwell's Skill
Frank Merriwell's Chums	Frank Merriwell's Champions
Frank Merriwell's Foes	Frank Merriwell's Return to Yale
Frank Merriwell's Trip West	Frank Merriwell's Secret
Frank Merriwell Down South	Frank Merriwell's Loyalty
Frank Merriwell's Bravery	Frank Merriwell's Reward
Frank Merriwell's Races	Frank Merriwell's Faith
Frank Merriwell's Hunting Tour	Frank Merriwell's Victories
Frank Merriwell's Sports Afield	Frank Merriwell's Power
Frank Merriwell at Yale	Frank Merriwell's Set-Back
Frank Merriwell's Courage	Frank Merriwell's False Friend
Frank Merriwell's Daring	Frank Merriwell's Brother

Illustrated, cloth binding, 50 cents per volume

For sale by all booksellers, or sent, postpaid, on receipt of price by the publisher

DAVID McKAY, Philadelphia

THE MOTOR POWER SERIES

Donald Grayson's Famous Motor Stories for Boys

Mr. Grayson is an accomplished writer of up-to-the-minute juvenile stories which are eagerly read by modern American lads.

In his new series, his characters have exciting adventures with every kind of motor-driven machines—motor cycles, automobiles, aëroplanes and submarines.

You may readily see what a vast field for adventures Mr. Grayson has chosen.

Now Ready

BOB STEELE'S MOTOR CYCLE
BOB STEELE ON HIGH GEAR
BOB STEELE FROM AUTO TO AIRSHIP
BOB STEELE AFLOAT IN THE CLOUDS
BOB STEELE'S SUBMARINE CRUISE
BOB STEELE IN STRANGE WATERS
BOB STEELE'S MOTOR BOAT
BOB STEELE'S WINNING RACE
BOB STEELE'S NEW AËROPLANE
BOB STEELE'S LAST FLIGHT

Illustrated, cloth binding, 50 cents per volume

For sale by all booksellers, or sent, postpaid, on receipt of price by the publisher

DAVID McKAY, Philadelphia

BOYS OF LIBERTY LIBRARY



NEW SERIES of splendid tales of the wonderful and stirring adventures of boys who fought in The Revolutionary War, The French and Indian Wars, and Naval Battles of 1812.

The stories are written in an intensely interesting style, and no boy can read them without being aroused to the highest pitch of patriotic enthusiasm.

We give herewith a list of titles now ready. Read the first and you will want to read all the others. 12mo. Cloth, handsomely bound.

PAUL REVERE. By John De Morgan.
THE FIRST SHOT FOR LIBERTY. By John De Morgan.
FOOLING THE ENEMY. By John De Morgan.
INTO THE JAWS OF DEATH. By John De Morgan.
THE HERO OF TICONDEROGA. By John De Morgan.
ON TO QUEBEC. By John De Morgan.
FIGHTING HAL. By John De Morgan.
MARION AND HIS MEN. By John De Morgan.
THE YOUNG AMBASSADOR. By John De Morgan.
THE YOUNG GUARDSMAN. By John De Morgan.
THE CRUISE OF THE LIVELY BEE. By John De Morgan.
THE TORY PLOT. By T. C. Harbaugh.
IN BUFF AND BLUE. By T. C. Harbaugh.
WASHINGTON'S YOUNG SPY. By T. C. Harbaugh.
UNDER GREENE'S BANNER. By T. C. Harbaugh.
FOR FREEDOM'S CAUSE. By T. C. Harbaugh.
CAPTAIN OF THE MINUTE MEN. By Harrie Irving Hancock.
THE QUAKER SPY. By Lieut. Lounsberry.
FIGHTING FOR FREEDOM. By Lieut. Lounsberry.
BY ORDER OF THE COLONEL. By Lieut. Lounsberry.
A CALL TO DUTY. By Lieut. Lounsberry.
IN GLORY'S VAN. By Lieut. Lounsberry.
THE TRADER'S CAPTIVE. By Lieut. Lounsberry.
"OLD PUT" THE PATRIOT. By Frederick A. Ober.
THE LEAGUE OF FIVE. By Commander Post.
THE KING'S MESSENGER. By Capt. Frank Ralph.
DASHING PAUL JONES. By Frank Sheridan.
FROM MIDSHIPMAN TO COMMODORE. By Frank Sheridan.
THE CRUISE OF THE ESSEX. By Frank Sheridan.
LAND HERO OF 1812. By C. C. Hotchkiss.
FOLLOWING MAD ANTHONY. By T. C. Harbaugh.
THE YOUNG CAPTAINS. By T. C. Harbaugh.
CAMPAIGNING WITH BRADDOCK. By William Murray Graydon.

Price, 50 cents per volume

For sale by all booksellers, or sent, postpaid, on receipt of price by the publisher

DAVID McKAY, Philadelphia



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY

Los Angeles

This book is DUE on the last date stamped below.

JRL MAR 15 1972

RENEWAL MAR 28 1972

~~JRL APR 11 1972~~

RENEWAL APR 11 1972

RENEWAL ~~WENT TO JRL~~ APR 25 1972

APR 23 1972



PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE
THIS BOOK CARD



University Research Library

ಗು
ದ
ವ
ಗ
ವ
ಗ
ಃ

CALL

20
75
80
81
C
22

150

VOLUME 10A

PT

COM

